MLLE. FOUCHETTE

A NOVEL OF FRENCH LIFE

BY

CHARLES THEODORE MURRAY

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MLLE. FOUCHETTE

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FOUCHETTE

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BY

CHARLES THEODORE MURRAY

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TO

MR. R. F. ("TODY") HAMILTON

A CHARMING GENTLEMAN, DELIGHTFUL
TRAVELLING COMPANION, PRAC-
TICAL PHILOSOPHER, AND
RELIABLE FRIEND

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MLLE. FOUCHETTE

CHAPTER I

"GET along, you little beast!"

Madame Podvin accompanied her admonition with a vigorous blow from her heavy hand.

"Out, I say!"

Thump.

"You lazy caniche!"

Thump.

"You get no breakfast here this morning!"

Thump.

"Out with you!"

Thump.

In the mean time the unhappy object of these objurgations and blows had been rapidly propelled towards the open door, and was with a final thump knocked into the street.

A stray dog? Oh, no; a dog is never abused in this way in Paris. It would probably cause a riot.

It was only a wee bit of a child,—dirty, clothed in rags, with tangled blonde hair that had never, apparently, seen a comb, and whose little bare feet and thin ankles were incrusted with the dried filth of the gutters.

Being only a child, the few neighbors who were abroad at that early hour merely grinned at her as she

picked herself up and limped away without a cry or a word.

"She's a tough one," muttered a witness.

"She's got to be mighty tough to stand the Podvin," responded another.

In the rapidly increasing distance the child seemed to justify these remarks; for she began to step out nimbly towards the town of Charenton without wasting time over her grievances.

"All the same, I'm hungry," she said to herself, "and the streets of Charenton will be mighty poor picking half an hour hence."

She paused presently to examine a pile of garbage in front of a house. But the dogs had been there before her,—there was nothing to eat there.

These piles of garbage awaited the tour of the carts; they began to appear at an early hour in the morning, and within an hour had been picked over by rag-pickers, dogs, and vagrants until absolutely nothing was left that could be by any possibility utilized by these early investigators. Here and there two or three dogs contested the spoils of a promising pile, to separate with watchful amity to gnaw individual bones.

As it was a principal highway from the Porte de Charenton to the town, the piles of refuse had been pretty thoroughly overhauled by the dogs and human scum that infested the barrier.

Finally, the girl stopped as a stout woman appeared at a grille with a paper of kitchen refuse which she was about to throw into the street.

They looked at each other steadily,—the child with eager, hungry eyes; the woman with resentment.

"There is nothing here for you," rasped the latter, retaining her hold upon the folded parcel as she advanced to the curb and glanced up and down the street.

The child, who had unconsciously carried her rag-picker's hook, stood waiting in the middle of the road.

"Don't you hear me?" repeated the woman, threateningly. "Be off with you!"

"It is a public road," said the little one.

"You beggar——"

"I haven't asked you for anything, madame," interrupted the child, with quivering voice,—"I'd die before asking you for anything,—but I have as much right to the road as you."

There was a flash of defiance in the small blue eyes now.

Two street dogs came up on a run. The woman threw down her parcel to them and, retreating, slammed the iron gate after her.

With a wicked swing of her hook the child drove the dogs away and hastily inspected the garbage. A piece of stale crust and some half-decayed fruit rewarded her. A gristled end of beef she threw to the dogs, that watched her wistfully a few yards away.

"Voilà! I divide fair, messieurs," said she, skilfully munching the sound spots out of the fruit and casting the rest on the ground.

"One would have thought madame was about to spread a banquet," she muttered.

She sauntered away, stopping to break the crust with a piece of loose paving, with a sharp eye out for other windfalls.

A young girl saw her from a garden, and shyly peeped through the high wrought-iron fence at the little savage.

Though the latter never stopped a second in her process of mastication, she eyed the other quite as curiously,—something as she might have regarded a strange but beautiful animal through the bars of its cage.

In experience and practical knowledge of life the respective ages of these two might have been reversed; the child of the street been sixteen instead of twelve.

Undersized, thin, sallow, and sunburned,—bare-headed, barefooted, dirty, and ragged,—she formed a striking contrast to the rosy-cheeked, plump, full-lipped, and well-dressed young woman within.

The extraordinary sound of crunching very naturally attracted the first attention of the elder.

"What in the world is that which you are eating, child?" she asked.

"Bread, ma'm'selle."

"Bread! Why, it's covered with dirt!"

"Yes, ma'm'selle."

Redoubled exertion of the sound young teeth.

"Why do you eat that?"

"Hungry, ma'm'selle."

"Heavens!"

Continuous crunching, while the child knocks the remaining crust against the wall to get the sand out of it, the dirt of the paving-stone.

"What's your name?"

"Fouchette."

"Fouchette? Fouchette what?"

" Nothing, ma'm'selle,—just Fouchette."

" Where do you live, Fouchette? Do throw that dirty bread away, child!"

" Say, now, ma'm'selle, do you see anything green in my eye?"

The young woman seriously inspects the blue eye that is rolled up at her and shakes her head.

" N-no; I don't see anything."

" Very well," said Fouchette, continuing her attack on the slowly dissolving crust.

" Throw it away, I tell you!—I'll run and get you some,—that's a good child!"

Fouchette stopped suddenly and remained immobile, regarding her interlocutor sharply.

" Truly?" she asked.

" Certainly."

The child looked at what remained of the crust, hesitated, sighed, then dropped it on the ground. The young woman hastily re-entered the house and presently reappeared with a huge sandwich with meat on a liberal scale.

" Oh, how good you are, ma'm'selle!" cried Fouchette.

Her blue eyes sparkled with pleasure,—her young mouth watered as the sandwich was passed between the railing.

" What is that,—why, there is blood on your neck, Fouchette!"

The child felt her neck with her hand and brought it away.

" So it is," said she, sinking her teeth into the sandwich.

"Here,—come closer,—turn this way. It's running down now. How did you hurt yourself?"

"Dame! It is nothing, ma'm'selle."

"Nothing! You are just black and blue!"

"Mostly black," said Fouchette. The world looked ever so much brighter.

"You've been fighting," suggested the young woman, tentatively.

"No, ma'm'selle."

"Then somebody struck you."

"Quite right, ma'm'selle."

This was delivered with such an air of nonchalance that the young lady smiled.

"You speak as if it were a common occurrence," she observed.

"It is," said Fouchette, with a desperate swallow,—"Podvin."

"Po-Podvin?"

"Yes, ma'm'selle."

"Person you live with?"

Fouchette nodded,—she had her mouth full.

"They beat you?"

"Most every day."

"Why?"

"Er—exercise, mostly, I think."

The half-sly, half-humorous squint of the left blue eye set the sympathetic young woman laughing in spite of herself. The remarkable precocity of these petites misérables of the slums was new to her.

"But you had father and mother——"

"I don't know, ma'm'selle,—at least they never showed up."

"But, my child, you must have started——"

"I started in a rag-heap, ma'm'selle. There's where the Podvin found me."

"In a rag-heap!"

"Yes, ma'm'selle,—so they say."

"But don't you remember anything at all before that?"

"Precious little. Only this: that I came a long ways off, walking, and riding in market carts, and walking some more,—and then the Podvin found me, —near here,—and here I am. That's all."

"What does Podvin do for a living?"

"Drinks."

"Ah! And madame?"

"Hammers me."

"And you?"

"Rags."

"Now, Fouchette, which is 'the' Podvin?"

"Madame, of course!"

The young woman laughed merrily, and Fouchette gave forth a singular, low, unmusical tinkle. She was astonished that the young lady should put such a question, then amused as she thought of Mother Podvin playing second to anybody.

"What a lively little girl you are, Fouchette!" said her questioner, pleasantly.

"It's the fleas, ma'm'selle."

"W-wh-what?"

"I sleep with Tartar."

"Who's Tartar, and what——"

"He's the dog, ma'm'selle."

"Heavens!"

"Oh, he's the best of the family, ma'm'selle, very sure!" protested Fouchette, naïvely.

"No doubt of it, poor child!"

"Only for him I'd freeze in winter; and sometimes he divides his dinner with me—as well as his fleas—when he is not too hungry, you know. This amuses the Podvin so that sometimes, when we have company, she will not give me any dinner, so I'll have to beg of Tartar. And we have lots of fun, and I dance——"

"You dance after that? Why——"

"Oh, I love to dance, ma'm'selle. I can——".

Fouchette elevated her dirty little bare foot against the railing above her head by way of illustration; while, half shocked, half laughing, the other hastily exclaimed,—

"Là, là, là! Put it down, Fouchette! Put it down!"

A restless glance up and down the road and back towards the house seemed to relieve the young woman materially; she laughed now with delightful abandon.

"So Tartar and you are good friends in spite of the—the——"

"The fleas,—yes, ma'm'selle. He loves me and me alone. Nobody dares come near him when we sleep —or eat,—and I love him dearly. Did you ever love anybody, ma'm'selle?"

This artless question appeared to take the young woman by surprise; for she grew confused and quite red, and finally told little Fouchette to "run along, now, and don't be silly."

"Not with fleas,—oh, no; I didn't mean that!" cried the child, conscious of having made a faux pas, but not clear.

But the young woman was already flying through the flower-garden, and quickly disappeared around the corner of the house without once looking back.

Fouchette then let go of her breath and heaved a deep sigh as she turned away.

It was the only occasion within her childish recollection when one of her own sex had spoken to her in kindness. Now and then she had dreamed of such a thing as having occurred in the long ago,—in some other world, perhaps,—this was real, tangible, perceptible to the eye and ear.

> "Sweet words
> Are like the voices of returning birds,
> Filling the soul with summer."

For the moment the starved soul of the child was filled with summer softness, as she slowly returned along the route she had recently come, thinking of the beautiful young lady and the sensuous odor of the flowers which had penetrated to the innermost recesses of her being.

As she neared the barriers, however, and was gradually recalled to the harsh realities of her daily environment, these fleeting dreams had disappeared with the rest, leaving the old, fixed feelings of hopelessness and sullen combativeness. With this revival came the pain from the still recent blows of the morning, temporarily forgotten.

The barriers at Paris have long been the popular haunts of poverty and crime,—though their moral conditions have been greatly modified by the multitude of tramways that afford the poor of Paris more

extended outings. The barriers run along the line of fortifications and form the "octroi," or tax limit of the city. These big iron gates of the barriers intercept every road entering Paris and are manned by customs officials, who inspect all incoming vehicles and packages for dutiable goods.

Within the barriers is Paris,—beyond is the rest of the world. Inside are the police agents,—outside are the gendarmes.

Cheap shows, gypsy camps, merry-go-rounds, and all sorts of games hover about the barriers, where no special tax is exacted and where the regulations with reference to public order are somewhat lax. They attract noisy and unruly crowds on Sundays and holidays. A once popular song ran:

> "Pour rigoler montons,
> Montons à la barrière."

Which means, that to have a good time let us go up to the barrier.

These resorts are infested by the human vermin that prey on the ignorant,—thieves, pickpockets, robbers, and cutthroats of every description. This very wood of Vincennes near at hand, now the glory of picnickers, was for centuries the home and stronghold of the robber and professional assassin. And it is a rash man at this day who would voluntarily risk his purse and life by being found alone in the neighborhood after nightfall.

Fouchette's territory lay chiefly in the streets and suburbs of Charenton. To cover it she was compelled to get out before daylight. If she had good luck and brought in anything valuable she got an extra allow-

ance of soup, sometimes with a scrap of meat, to be invariably divided between her and Tartar, or a small glass of red wine; if her find was poor her fare was reduced, and instead of food she often received blows.

These blows, however, were never administered in the sight of the dog, Tartar,—only once, when the savage animal resented this treatment of his side partner by burying his teeth in Mother Podvin's arm.

Little Fouchette remembered this friendly intervention by bringing home any choice bits of meat found in the house garbage during her morning tour. Mother Podvin remembered it by thereafter thumping Fouchette out of sight of her canine friend and protector. The infuriated woman would have slaughtered the offending spaniel on the spot, only Tartar was of infinite service to her husband in his business. She dared not, so she took it out on Fouchette.

Monsieur Podvin's business was not confined wholly to drinking, though it was perhaps natural that Fouchette should have reached that conclusion, since she had seen him in no other occupation. Monsieur Podvin, like many others of the mysterious inhabitants of the barriers, worked nights. Not regularly, but as occasion invited him or necessity drove him. On such occasions Tartar was brought forth from the cellar, where he reposed peacefully by the side of his little protégée, and accompanied his master. As Tartar was held in strict confinement during the day, he was invariably delighted when the call of duty gave him this outing. And as he returned at all sorts of hours in the early morning, his frail partner and bedfellow never felt that it was necessary to sit up for him.

Nevertheless, Fouchette was quite nervous, and sometimes sleepless, down there among the wine-bottles in the dark, on her pallet of straw, when she awoke to find her hairy protector missing; though, usually, she knew of his absence only by his return, when he licked her face affectionately before curling down closely as possible by her side.

Now, Monsieur Podvin's business, ostensibly, was that of keeping a low cabaret labelled "Rendez-Vous pour Cochers." It might have been more appropriately called a rendezvous for thieves, though this seems rather hypercritical when one knows the cabbies of the barriers. But the cabaret was really run by Madame Podvin, which robs monsieur of the moral responsibilities.

As a matter of fact, Monsieur Podvin was a mighty hunter, like Nimrod and Philippe Augustus, and other distinguished predecessors. His field of operations was the wood of Vincennes, where Philippe was wont to follow the chase some hundreds of years ago, and wherein a long line of royal chasseurs have subsequently amused themselves.

With the simple statement that they were all hunters and robbers, from Augustus to Podvin, inclusive, the resemblance ends; for the nobles and their followers followed the stag and wild boar, whereas Monsieur Podvin was a hunter of men.

At first blush the latter would appear to be higher game and a more dangerous amusement. Not at all. For the men thus run down by Monsieur Podvin and his faithful dog, Tartar, were little above the beasts from self-indulgence at any time, and were wholly

devoid of even the lowest animal instincts when captured. They were the victims of their own bestiality before they became the victims of Podvin.

Every gala-day in the popular wood of Vincennes left a certain amount of human flotsam and jetsam lying around under the trees and in the dark shadows, helpless from a combination of wood alcohol and water treated with coloring matter and called "wine." It was Monsieur Podvin's business to hunt these unfortunates up and to relieve them of any valuables of which they might be possessed, and which they had no use for for the time being. It was quite as inspiriting and ennobling as going over a battlefield and robbing the dead, and about as safe for the operators. The intelligence of Tartar and his indefatigable industry lent an additional zest to the hunt and made it at once easy and remunerative. Tartar pointed and flushed the prey; all his master had to do was to go through the victims, who were usually too helpless to object. If, as was sometimes the case, one so far forgot himself as to do so, the sight of a gleaming knife-blade generally reconciled the victim to the peaceful surrender of his property. On special occasions Monsieur Podvin was assisted by a patron of the Rendez-Vous pour Cochers; but he usually worked alone, being of a covetous nature and unwilling to share profits. When accompanied, it was with the understanding that the booty was to be divided into equal shares, Tartar counting as an individual and coming in on equal terms, and one share on account of Fouchette,—all of which went to Monsieur Podvin.

For, without any knowledge or reward, Fouchette

was made to do the most dangerous part of the business,—which lay in the disposal of the proceeds of the chase. It was innocently carried by her in her rag-basket to the receiver inside the barriers.

Where adults would have been suspected and probably searched, first by the customs officers and then by the police, Fouchette went unchallenged. Her towering basket, under which bent the frail little half-starved figure, marked her scarcely more conspicuously than her ready wit and cheerful though coarse retorts to would-be sympathizers. Her load was delivered to those who examined its contents out of her sight. The price went back by another carrier,—a patron of the Rendez-Vous pour Cochers. "La petite chiffonnière" was widely known in the small world of the Porte de Charenton.

As for Fouchette,—well, she has already, in her laconic way, given about all that she knew of her earlier history. Picked up in a rag-heap by a chiffonnière of the barrier, she had succeeded to a brutal life that had in five years reduced her to the physical level of the spaniel, Tartar. In fact, her position was really inferior, since the dog was never beaten and had always plenty to eat.

Instead of killing her, as would have been the fate of one of the lower animals subjected to the same treatment, all this had seemed to toughen the child,—to render her physically and morally as hard as nails.

It would be too much or too little—according to the point of view—to assume that Fouchette was patient under her yoke and that she went about her tasks with the docility of a well-trained animal. On the contrary,

she not only rebelled in spirit, but she often resisted with all her feeble strength, fighting, feet, hands, and teeth, with feline ferocity. Having been brought to the level of brutes, she had become a brute in instinct, in her sensibility to kindness, her pig-headedness, resentment of injury, and dogged resistance.

On her ninth birthday—which, however, was unknown—Monsieur Podvin, over his fourth bottle, offered to put her up against the dog of his convive of the moment, so much was he impressed with Fouchette's fighting talent. Fouchette, who was serving the wine, was not unmindful of the implied compliment. She glanced at the animal and then at its owner with a bitter smile that in her catlike jaws seemed almost a snarl,—

"I'd much rather fight le Cochon," said she.

"Ho! ho! ho!" roared the man, who was a dirty ruffian of two hundred pounds, mostly alcohol, and who enjoyed the fitting sobriquet of "le Cochon," from his appearance and characteristic grunt.

"Voilà!" cried Monsieur Podvin; "that's Fouchette!"

"Pardieu! but what a little scorcher!" exclaimed the ruffian, rather admiringly.

"The dog is honest and decent," said the child, turning her steely blue eyes on the man.

"Fouchette!"

The peremptory voice was that of "the" Podvin behind the zinc. Such plain talk—any talk at all about "honesty" and "decency"—at the Rendez-Vous pour Cochers was interdicted. And had the girl noted the look which followed her retreating figure she might

have gone abroad the next morning with less confidence.

From that time on these two, ruffian and child, snapped at each other whenever they came in contact, —which, as the man was an habitué of the place, and occasional assistant of Monsieur Podvin in his business of scouring the wood of Vincennes for booty, was pretty nearly every day. For in addition to her labors as a rag-picker Fouchette was compelled to wait upon customers in the wine-shop and run errands and perform pretty much all the work of housekeeping for the Podvins. Her foraging expeditions merely filled in the time when customers were not expected.

Strange as it may appear, Fouchette liked this extra hour or so abroad better than any other duty of the day,—it was freedom and independence. With her high pannier strapped to her slender back and iron hook in hand she roamed about the streets of Charenton, sometimes crossing over through ancient Conflans and coming home by the Marne and Seine. There were only footpads, low-browed rascals, thieves, and belated robbers about at this hour, before the trams began to make their trips to and from Paris, but these people never disturbed the petite chiffonnière, save to sometimes exchange the foul witticisms of the slums, in which contests the ready tongue and extensive vocabulary of little Fouchette invariably left a track of good-humor. They knew she hadn't a sou, and, besides, was one of their class.

Fouchette was a shining example of what environment can make of any human being, taken sufficiently young and having no vacation.

Up to this particular morning Fouchette had accepted her position in life philosophically as a necessary condition, and with no more consideration of the high and mighty of this world than the high and mighty had for her. Slowly and by insensible degrees, since she was too young to mark the phenomena in any case, she had been forged and hammered into a living piece of moral obliquity,—and yet the very first contact with an innocent mind and kindly sympathy awoke in her childish breast a subtle consciousness that something was wrong.

She fell asleep later, worn out with toil and sore from bruises, her thin arm flung across Tartar's neck, to dream of a plump young face, a pair of big, dark, soulful eyes that searched and found her heart. The noise of the revelling robbers above her faded into one sweet, deep, mellow voice that was music to her ears. And the powerful odors that impregnated the atmosphere of the cellar and rendered it foul to suffocation—dampness and dog and dregs of wine, and garlic and decaying vegetables—became the languorous breath of June flowers.

Ah! the beautiful young lady! The beautiful flowers!

Their perfume seemed to choke her, like the deadly tuberoses piled upon a coffin.

She tried to cry out, but her mouth was crowded full of something, and she awoke to find herself in the brutal hands of some one in the darkness. She kicked and scratched and struggled in vain, to be quickly vanquished by a brutish blow.

Tartar! Tartar!

Oh, if Tartar were only there!

When she came to herself she was conscious of being carried in her own basket on the back of one who stepped heavily and somewhat uncertainly along the road.

She was doubled up like a half-shut jack-knife, her feet and head uppermost, and had great difficulty in breathing by reason of her cramped position and the ill-smelling rags with which she was covered. Besides which, she felt sick from the cruel blow in her stomach.

Yet her senses were keenly alert.

She was well aware who had her; for the man gave out his characteristic grunt with every misstep, and there was no one else in the world likely to do her serious physical injury.

She knew that it was still dark, both from the way the man walked and from the cool dampness of the atmosphere with which she was familiar.

Yes, it was le Cochon.

She knew him for an escaped convict, for a murderer as well as a robber, and that he would slit a throat for twenty sous if there were fair promise of immunity.

She felt instinctively that she was lost.

All at once the man stopped, went on, paused again.

Then she heard other footsteps. They grew louder. They were evidently approaching. They were the heavy, hob-nailed shoes of some laborer on his way to work.

Her heart stood still for a few moments as she listened, then beat wildly with renewed hope.

If she could only cry out; but the rag that filled her mouth made giving the alarm impossible.

Finally, after some hesitation, her abductor moved on as if to meet the coming footsteps, slowly, and leaning far over now and then, in apparent attempt to counterfeit the occupation of a rag-picker. And at such moments the child felt that she was standing on the back of her neck.

The heavy tramp of the stranger grew nearer—was upon them.

"Bonjour!" called out a cheerful, manly voice.

"Bonjour, monsieur!" replied le Cochon, humbly.

"You are abroad early this morning."

"It is necessary, if an honest chiffonnier would live these times."

"Possible. Good luck to you."

"Thanks, monsieur."

The steps had never paused and were quickly growing fainter down the road, while the young heart within the basket grew fainter and fainter with the fading sounds.

This temporary hope thus crushed was more cruel than her former despair.

Her bearer uttered a low volley of horrible imprecations directed towards the unknown.

He stopped suddenly, and, unstrapping the basket from his shoulders, placed it on the ground.

Fouchette smelled the morning vapors of the river; discerned now the distinct gurgle of the flood.

As the robber took the rags from the basket and pulled her roughly forth, the full significance of her perilous situation rushed upon her. She trembled so

that she could scarcely stand,—would have toppled over the edge of the quai but for the strong arm of le Cochon, who restrained her.

"Not yet, petite," said he.

And he began to strap the basket upon her young shoulders.

"Pardieu! we must regard conventionalities," he added, with devilish malignity.

It was early gray of morning, and a mist hung over the dark waters of the Seine. No attempt had been made to obstruct her vision, which, long habituated to the hour, took in the road, the stone quai, the boats moored not far away, the human monster at her side, all at a single sweeping glance.

Her feet and arms were bound, the gag was still in her mouth,—there was no escape, no succor.

There was the river; there was le Cochon.

Nothing more.

What more, indeed, was necessary to complete the picture?

Death.

Nothing was easier. No conclusion more mathematically certain.

With his knife between his teeth the assassin hastily adjusted the straps under her arms. It was but the work of half a minute from the time he had stopped, though to the terror-stricken child it seemed an age of torment.

The rags were packed tightly down in the bottom of the basket.

"It'll do for a sinker," said the man.

Then he cut the thongs that held her arms, severed

the ligament that bound her feet, and with one hand removed the cloth from her mouth, while with the other he suddenly pushed his victim over the edge of the stone quai.

"Voilà!"

Short as was the opportunity, Fouchette gave one terrified shriek as she went over the brink,—a shriek that pierced the river mists and reverberated from the stone walls and parapets and went ringing up and down the surface of the swiftly swirling stream.

Again, as she reappeared, battling with the murky waters with desperate stroke and splash, her childish voice rose,—

"Tartar! Tartar!"

And yet again, choking with the flood,—

"Tar—Tar—tar!"

It was the last thought,—the last appeal,—this despairing cry for the only one on earth she loved,—the only being on earth who loved her.

CHAPTER II

THE piercing cry of Fouchette seemed yet to linger in the misty morning air, thrilling the distant ear, vibrating upon the unstrung nerves of the outcasts beneath the far-away bridges, borne upon the surface of the waters, when it was answered out of the darkness by a sharp, shrill note of sympathy.

Those who have heard the wild hyena in his native fastnesses responding to the appeal of its imperilled young might have understood this half-human, half-savage cry of the roused animal.

And almost simultaneously came the swift rush of feet that seemed to claw the granite into flying electric sparks.

The repulsive face of the convict murderer turned pale at the sound, and at the sight of the glowing eyeballs his ugly teeth clattered against each other. Nevertheless, the instinct of self-preservation made him crouch low, deadly knife in hand, to receive the expected attack.

At the sight of le Cochon the dog emitted a howl of wrath. With the marvellous judgment, however, of the trained animal that will not be turned from the trail of a deer by the scent of skunk, this sight scarcely checked his plunge.

Tartar's divination was unerring. He wasted no effort in battling with the current or paddling around in a circle, but turned at once and swam rapidly with the stream. He spent no breath in useless vociferation. All his canine strength was put forth to an end. And these instincts were quickly rewarded by the sight

of a strange object floating ahead of him,—something a little higher than the water.

The fiend who had packed the old rags into the bottom of the pannier with the double motive of indicating an accident and of carrying the child under beneath its weight had overdone the trick. For the rags, once soaked, proved so much heavier than the frail body that it turned turtle and threw the child face upward and partially above the surface. The load instead of sinking buoyed her up, and, being strapped securely to it, she could not fall off. Whereas if she had simply been thrown into the river without these precautions, she would have gone to the bottom.

With a succession of low whines now that were almost human sobs, the excited spaniel quickened his stroke, if, indeed, such a thing were possible, and redoubled his energies. He saw that it was the body of his beloved mate.

But when he reached the floating object and seized it with his teeth it was to find that he was powerless to drag it ashore. In vain he struggled and splashed and tugged at it. The load was too much for him. Almost frantic from disappointment, he soon became exhausted. He seemed to realize that he would not only be unable to save his little mistress, but was likely to perish with her. It was not long before his fight ceased. He hung on by his teeth now to keep from sinking.

Thus the combination, waterlogged basket, unconscious girl, and exhausted dog, floated silently along, under the National Bridge, past the bridge of Tolbiac, and came opposite the great freight-yards of the Or-

leans Railway on the left and the greater Entrepôts de Bercy on the right.

The homeless of both sexes that swarm the shelter of the bridges of the Seine were just awakening to life and a renewed sense of misery. The thin fog had begun to lift. The sharper eyes of the dog discovered the proximity of human beings before the latter could see him, and he let go of his floater long enough to utter a few sharp yelps of distress.

A tramp, wider awake or less benumbed by liquor than his fellows, heard the sounds from the river and called the attention of companions.

A dog in distress,—it was enough to rouse the sympathetic blood of any true Parisian. The more active of the men ran vociferously along the bank, raising the watchmen of either shore.

Numerous barges and tugs lay moored along the Quai de la Gare. From these lights began to show. Men sprang up as if by magic. Those on one side of the river shouted to those on the other side to find out what was the matter, and the other side shouted back that they didn't know,—but it was somebody or something in the river. As there is always "somebody" in the river, the idea did not attract so much attention as the possibility that it was "something."

When it was ascertained that it was a dog—which followed upon additional pathetic appeals from the water—there was wild excitement all along the line. Men tumbled over barrels and boxes, and ran plump up against walls, and fell into pits, and even into the river itself, in their anxiety to keep pace with the sounds from the fog.

Others began hastily to get out boats, and ran about with lanterns and oars and ends of rope and other life-saving paraphernalia. These boats put off simultaneously from either side, and contained police agents, bargemen, roustabouts, watchmen, watermen, and bums. As the inhabitants of the Long Island shore at the cry of "A whale!" man the boats and race to get in the first harpoon, so these rivermen of the Seine now pulled for a drowning dog.

The conflicting sounds of human voices, the grating of boats against the stones, the rattle of chains, the splash of oars, were plainly heard and as plainly understood by the intelligent animal now struggling with death. Through his set jaws, which still clung to the child's clothing, or, rather, through his nose, there came occasional whines of distress that were almost heart-rending in their intensity.

These last faint appeals for help directed the rescuers.

"Mon Dieu!" exclaimed a waterman, nearing the spot and rowing alongside.

"It's a child!" screamed another.

"No, it's a dog," said a third.

The light was still uncertain and objects confusing.

"It's dog and child——"

"It's dead!"

"Not yet, monsieur."

"I mean the child."

"Dead?"

"No; the dog has held its face above water."

"The dog,—quick! he's sinking!"

"Here!"

"A rope!"

"There!"

"No, no! Catch him by the neck!"

"Save the child first!"

"I've got him!"

"And I've got her!"

"Hang on to the dog! Pull him into the boat, stupid!"

"Why, she's strapped down to something!"

"What is this, anyhow?"

"Pull the dog loose, man!—he'll drown her yet!"

"There!"

"Your knife, Pierre!"

"Hold!"

This was from the river policeman, who held up his bull's-eye lantern so that it threw a yellow glare on the white upturned face.

"She's dead, poor little thing!"

"We shall bring in the body just as it is," said the official.

"But——"

"That's the law!"

"Tonnerre! Is it the law to let a child drown in one's sight?"

"Oh, she's dead enough, I'm afraid."

"I don't know about that."

"Bring it in just as it is," repeated the official, adjusting a rope to the mysterious thing beneath the body.

"Sacré bleu! And if she's alive?"

"Poor doggie! He's about done for too."

And so it really seemed, for Tartar lay in the bottom of the boat, still breathing, but in convulsive gasps.

In his teeth remained a portion of the child's clothing, torn away with him. He had hung to his charge to the last. His jaws had never relaxed.

In the mean time the whole fleet with its spoils had been floating steadily down with the powerful current. Amidst the wrangle of contending voices, and with some angry altercation, the police boat and its accompanying consorts were towing the yet unknown object and its silent burden towards the shore.

This was not an easy job, since the river becomes more narrow as it threads the city, and the current proportionately stronger, and the undertow caught at the low-hanging mass as if determined to bear it down to the morgue just below. They had been carried under the Pont de Bercy and were drawing near the Quai d'Austerlitz. Finally they got ashore at the Gare d'Orléans.

"Parbleu! it's a little chiffonnière!"

"Truly!"

"She has evidently fallen into the river with her basket on her back."

They had now, in the rapidly growing daylight, discovered the character of the object that held her in its embrace. In fact, when half a dozen stout fellows had attempted to lift the whole thing out of the water the rags had dropped out unseen and were borne away by the current, leaving the light empty pannier and the body of the child in their hands. And the men marvelled at the resistance they had encountered.

A messenger had been at once despatched for medical assistance. The great hospital of Salpêtrière was near at hand.

"May as well take her to the morgue," muttered one.

"Soon enough,—soon enough," replied the river policeman. "Follow the custom."

Notwithstanding the general opinion that it was too late, a rough boatman had torn off a section of his flannel shirt and was chafing the cold little hands, while another rubbed the legs and a third tried to restore respiration. These people were familiar with cases of drowning, and knew the best and simplest immediate first aid by heart.

To their very great surprise a few minutes sufficed to show that the child was still alive. By the time the doctor arrived she gave decided signs of returning animation. Under the influence of his restoratives she opened her eyes.

"Tartar!" she gasped.

"What's that, little one?" inquired the doctor, bending low over her. She still lay on the stone quai, a laborer's coat beneath her extended figure.

"Tar—Tartar," she repeated, again closing her eyes. "Oh, mon Dieu! I remember now. That wretch!—it could not have been!"

"Maybe it's her dog," suggested a man.

"Yes,—Tartar——"

"There, my child,—don't! Is it the dog?"

"Yes,—tell me——"

"Oh, he's all right.—Say!"

He hailed the group gathered about the other victim of the river.

"How's the dog?"

"All right, Monsieur le Docteur!"

Fouchette heard and brightened perceptibly. The doctor increased the effect by observing that the dog was coming around all right.

"But he's had a pretty close call."

"So it was Tartar, after all," whispered Fouchette. "Dear Tartar!"

"A brave dog, Tartar,—stuck to you to the last," put in the policeman.

"Truly!"

Half a dozen men cried at once, "Vive Tartar!" with the enthusiasm of true Frenchmen.

And if a dog ever did deserve the encomiums that were showered upon him Tartar certainly was that dog.

As soon as Fouchette began to revive, a stalwart bargewoman, awakened in her little cubby by the cries of the men in the vicinity, and who had hastily turned out to see for herself, had disappeared for a moment in her floating home, and shortly afterwards returned with some substantial clothing borrowed from her family wardrobe.

"How thin the child is!" she remarked, as she substituted the dry clothing on the spot.

"Thin!" growled a bystander; "she had to be mighty thin to come down the river on an empty basket!"

"You see, she must have fallen in with the basket on her back——"

"I was pushed in," corrected Fouchette.

"Pushed into the river?"

"What's that?"

"Who did it, child?"

"Impossible!"

"There is some devilish crime here."

"It's a case for the police."

This last observation came from the policeman as he brought out his note-book, while a buzz of indignation ran through the crowd.

Fouchette heard these mutterings and saw the inquisitorial pencil of the official in uniform. He had shut off his light with a snap.

At this moment Tartar, having heard the voice of his mistress, had struggled to his feet, and now dragged himself over to where she lay. The crowd separated for him.

"Ah! Tartar!" exclaimed Fouchette, affectionately, raising her hand to his head.

With a whimper of joy the noble animal licked her hand, her face and neck, wagging his bedraggled tail with intense satisfaction, winding up this demonstration by lying down by her side as closely as he could get, and giving a long breath, which in a human being would be called a sigh.

The act moved the coarse bargewoman to tears, while the men turned away to hide their emotion.

The silence was profound,—the testimony of a sentiment too deep for mere words.

The police agent was the first to come to the practical point in the situation. The violence phase of the case made him consequential. It would invite the attention of his superiors. It would get his name in the daily journals.

"What is your name, child?"

The intended victim of police interrogatory closed her eyes without answering.

"You were thrown into the river. It is necessary for us to know the name of the person who committed this outrage. If you do not know, it is our business to find out. The miscreant must be arrested and punished. Where do you live?"

No answer.

"Speak, my child! Speak up!"

She had reopened her eyes and now looked at him steadily, stonily, but without a word. He was nonplussed.

As Fouchette began rapidly to recover her strength she also recovered her self-possession, also the results of her training. Foremost among these were her suspicions of the police, whom she had come to believe were organized by society to restrain and harass the poor; that the informer was the lowest grade of humanity.

In addition to these precepts of the barriers, Fouchette was afraid. She knew the character of those whom she had left behind. She felt certain that if she betrayed them to the police she would be put out of the way.

Nor was this fear at all unreasonable. Without her recent terrible experience she would have been fully aware of the danger that attended a too loquacious tongue. The question of putting this one or that one "out of the way" had frequently been discussed openly and seriously at the Rendez-Vous pour Cochers. A word from her now would send the police down on that resort. Just a little while ago she was nervous

and unstrung, but, while she had at first formed the intention of bringing le Cochon to book, the very first question brought her face to face with the consequences. The second query increased her obstinacy. The peremptory command to speak out left her mute. By saying nothing she could compromise nobody.

"Only a street waif," suggested the doctor,—"probably has no home."

Fouchette, who had now risen to a sitting posture, nodded vivaciously.

"Then why didn't you say so?" growled the police agent. "Have you any parents?"

"No."

"Whom were you living with, and where?"

"Nowhere."

"Now, again,—what is your name?"

Silence.

"Why don't you answer?"

"Because it's none of your business," snapped Fouchette.

"We'll see about that before the Commissaire," retorted the agent. "He'll take the sulk out of you."

"Hold on," put in the bargewoman; "don't be harsh with her, monsieur. She has been abused dreadfully. Her body is covered with bruises."

"So much more reason we should find out who did it,—who has attempted to murder the child into the bargain."

"She has been cruelly beaten."

Fouchette nodded.

"I'll have to take you to the Commissariat, my child."

"I don't care where you take me,—that is, if Tartar goes along."

The dog regarded her inquiringly.

"Certainly," responded the agent,—"Tartar is a part of the case. Allons!"

He would have picked her up in his powerful arms, but she rebelled vigorously, protesting that she could walk.

"Very well. Good! You're a plucky one. You're the right stuff."

The little official party—the agent, Fouchette, Tartar, a waterman carrying the basket, the stout bargewoman bearing the child's wet clothing—took up the march, followed by several idlers in search of sensation.

Having arrived at the Commissariat, it was necessary to await the hour when it pleased Monsieur le Commissaire to put in an appearance. In the mean time Fouchette was disposed of on a bench within a railed space, her bare feet dangling, momentarily growing physically better and more mentally perplexed.

What would they do with her?

She dared not return to the Podvins. She knew of no other place to go. She was desperately alone in the world. Only Tartar, who once more stretched himself at her feet, with his head in a position where he could keep a half-open eye on his mistress. Tartar needed rest, and was getting it.

The police! Next to the murderer of the barrier she hated and feared the police.

Would they send her to prison?

After all, she thought, one might as well have been

drowned to a finish. It would have been an easy escape from this uncertainty and agony of mind.

She began to feel hungry. Gradually the thoughts of what she should do for something to eat, and where she would be able to get something for Tartar, drove out all other thoughts. If they could only get away now,—at this hour something might be found in the streets. She calculated the chances of escape by a sudden dash for the door. But there were several police agents lounging in the anteroom, and her conductor sat at the little gate of the enclosure. So the scheme was reluctantly dismissed. Anyhow, if they would let Tartar remain with her she didn't care much.

During this time several successive attempts were made by the police agents to get her to talk. She responded by "Yes" or "No" or a motion of the head to all questions not connected with her case. On this subject she was persistently silent.

An hour later the bargewoman, who had been in secret consultation with the police agents, went out and got Fouchette a roll and some cheese, which she ate eagerly. This woman was a coarse, masculine-looking creature with hands as hard and rough as a fowl's foot, a distinct moustache and tufts of hair cropping out here and there on her neck and chin, but her voice assumed a kindly tone. She led Fouchette to the farther corner of the room.

"I must go back to my boat now, chérie. Cheer up! And promise me one thing,—don't try the river again. You were not born to be drowned, anyhow. If you really want to die you'll have to try something else."

"But I don't want to die," protested Fouchette.

"And they send people to prison who attempt suicide," continued the woman.

"But I didn't, madame."

"The bodies spoil the water. There are so many of them floating by. I've seen hundreds of 'em in my time."

"No, indeed; I would rather live."

"That's right,—that's a dear! My barge is 'La Thérèse,'—named after me. We are in the coal trade. I want you to come and see me, petite. You shall take a trip to Rouen. Yes,—would you like to——"

"Oh, very much, madame!" interrupted Fouchette, joyfully.

"You shall."

"And Tartar?"

"Shall go too. We'll have fine times, I promise you. You will find us at the Quai d'Austerlitz when in Paris."

"Thank you,—so much! I've seen the big boats go by lots of times and wished I was on one—one with flowers and vines and a dog—Tartar. And sometimes I've seen 'em in my sleep—yes."

Fouchette at once lost herself in this prospect. It would be the most delightful thing in her life.

"Yes, it is very nice," continued the bargewoman. "Remember, chérie,—'La Thérèse.' You can bring the clothes with you. Ask for me,—'Thérèse.' My husband named the barge after me long ago."

"It's a pretty name," said the child.

"You think so? A name is—what is your real name, petite?"

"I don't know, madame," replied Fouchette, promptly and truthfully.

"What! Don't know your own name? Impossible!"

The woman was vexed, and made no effort to conceal her vexation. To be outwitted by a mere child was too much to bear with equanimity. As kindly disposed as she was by nature, she lost her temper at once at what she considered a stupid falsehood.

"You're an obstinate little brute!" she exclaimed, in a passion,—a state of mind aggravated by the laughter of the police agents in the room.

"Yes, and a little liar," she added.

"M—mad—madame!" stammered the trembling child, whose bright visions vanished in a twinkling.

"I don't wonder they threw you in the river,—not a bit!"

Fouchette's lips were now set in mute rage. She was up in arms at once. Her steely eyes shot fire. The honest bargewoman had almost won her childish confidence. Another word or two of kindness and she would have gained an easy victory. Now, however, everything was upset and the fat was in the fire.

Without a word Fouchette began to hurriedly divest herself of the clothing she wore and to throw the garments, piece by piece, on the floor.

So quickly was this accomplished that neither the astonished woman nor the puzzled police agents could interfere before the child stood there perfectly nude in the midst of them. Her frame, which was little more than a living skeleton covered with marks of violence, fairly quivered with anger. She choked so

that she could not speak. In another minute she had resumed her wet rags.

"Voilà!" she finally cried, pointing to the discarded garments. "At least you can never say that I asked for them or didn't return them!"

"Mon Dieu!" The woman was overwhelmed,—breathless.

To be misunderstood is often the bitterest thing to bear in this life. Madame Thérèse and little Fouchette were suffering simultaneously from this evil.

"Take 'em away!"

"But listen, child! I——"

"Take 'em away!" she screamed.

Tartar rose with an ominous growl and looked from his mistress to the woman.

"We don't need 'em, do we, Tartar? No! Let them take their gall and honey with 'em. Yes! They make us tired. Yes!"

To all of these observations—somewhat heavily weighted with barrier billingsgate—Tartar showed his approval by wagging his tail knowingly and by covering the small face bent down to him with canine kisses.

"Better come away, madame," said an agent, in a low voice, to the stupefied woman thus assailed. He laughed at her discomfiture. "It is waste kindness and waste time. You can't do anything with that sort of riffraff. It's only a stray cat fed to scratch you. They're a bad lot."

The "bad lot" had overheard this police philosophy, and it confirmed her pre-existing opinion of the police.

Monsieur le Commissaire was a grave and burly gentleman of middle life, with iron-gray hair and

moustache, and eyes that seemed to read their object through and through. He pulled this moustache thoughtfully as he listened to the report of the river police agent, all the time keeping the eyes upon the diminutive but defiant child before him. When he had learned everything,—including the scene in the station,—he said, abruptly,—

"Come in here, my child. Don't be afraid,—nobody's going to hurt you. Yes, bring the dog. Brave dog! Splendid fellow! Come! I'd like to own that dog, now,—I would, indeed!" he observed, as he closed the door of his private office; "but I suppose you wouldn't part with him for the world now, would you?"

"N-no. But he isn't mine, monsieur," she replied, regretfully.

"No? What a pity! Then perhaps I could buy him, eh?"

"I—I don't know. Monsieur Podvin——"

She stopped suddenly. But the magistrate was looking abstractedly over her head and did not appear to notice her slip of the tongue. He was thinking. It gave little Fouchette time to recover.

He was something like the enthusiastic physician who sees in his patient only "a case,"—something devoid of personality. He recognized in this waif a condition of society to be treated. In his mind she was a wholly irresponsible creature. Not the whole case in question,—oh, no; but a part of the case. What she had been, was now, or would be were questions that did not enter into the consideration. Nothing but the case.

Instead of putting the child through a course of questions,—what she anticipated and had steeled herself against,—he merely talked to her on what appeared to be topics foreign to the subject immediately in hand.

"You must be taken care of in some way," he declared. "Yes,—a child like you should not be left in the streets of Paris to beg or starve,—and it's against the law to beg——"

"But I never begged, monsieur," interrupted the child,—"never!"

"Of course not,—of course not! No; you are too proud to beg. That's right. But you couldn't make a living picking rags, and the law doesn't permit a child to pick rags in the streets of Paris."

"I never did, monsieur, never!"

"Of course not,—you would be arrested. But outside the barriers the work is not lucrative. Charenton, for instance, is not as prolific of rags as it is of rascals."

At the mention of Charenton Fouchette started visibly; but her interlocutor did not seem to notice it.

"No; it does not even give as brave a child as you enough to eat,—not if you work ever so hard,—let alone to provide comfortably for Tar—for Tartar. Eh, my brave spaniel? We must get Tartar some breakfast. Has Tartar had any breakfast?"

"No, monsieur,—oh, no! And he is so hungry!"

She was all eagerness and softness when it came to her faithful companion. Tartar began to take a lively interest in the conversation of which he knew himself the subject.

"Exactly," said the Commissaire, suddenly getting up. He had reached his conclusion. "Now, remain here a few minutes, little one, while I see about it."

He disappeared into the outer office and remained closeted in a small cabinet with a telephone. Then, calling one of his men in plain clothes aside, he gave some instructions in a rapid manner.

When he re-entered the private office he knew that a rascal named Podvin kept a disreputable cabaret near the Porte de Charenton, and that a small, thin child called Fouchette lived with the Podvins, who also kept a dog, liver-colored, with dark-brown splotches, named Tartar, but that the child was not yet missed, probably owing to the fact that it was her customary hour in the streets of Charenton. In the same time he had notified the Préfecture that a murderous attempt had been made on a child, probably by some one of the gang that infested the Rendez-Vous pour Cochers, and had been directed to co-operate with two skilled Central men in an investigation.

"All right, petite," said the Commissaire, rubbing his hands and assuming his most oily tone. "First we are going to have some dry clothes and some shoes and stockings and——"

"I only—I never wore shoes and stockings," interrupted Fouchette, somewhat embarrassed by this flood of finery. "I don't need 'em, monsieur. It is only Tartar's——"

"Oh, we'll attend to Tartar also,—don't be afraid."

"Monsieur is very kind."

"It is nothing. Come along, now. You're going to ride in a nice carriage, too,—for the crowd might fol-

low you in the street, you know,—and I'll send a man with you to take good care of you."

"But Tartar——"

"You can take him in the carriage with you if you wish,—yes, it is better, perhaps. He might get run over or lost."

"Oh!"

And thus Fouchette rode in state, and in wet rags at the same time, down past the great Jardin des Plantes, the Halle aux Vins, and along the Boulevard St. Germain to Rue St. Jacques, where they turned down across the Petit Pont and stopped in the court-yard of an immense building across the plaza from Notre Dame. Tartar was somewhat uneasy, as well as his little mistress, at this novelty of locomotion, but as long as they were together it seemed to be all right. So they looked out of the carriage windows at the sights that were as strange to their eyes as if they had never before been in the city of Paris. Meanwhile, to divert the child, the man at her side had gayly pointed out the objects of interest.

"Ah! and there is grand old Notre Dame," said he.

"What's that?"

"Notre Dame."

"It's a big house."

"Yes; but you've seen it, of course."

"Never."

"What!" he exclaimed, in astonishment; "you, a little Parisienne, and never saw Notre Dame?"

"You—you, monsieur, you have then seen everything in Paris?"

There was a vein of cold irony in the small voice.

"Er—w-well, not quite. Not quite, perhaps," he smilingly answered.

"No, nor I," she said.

"But Notre Dame——-"

"What's Notre Dame to me? Nothing!"

A slight gesture of impatience.

"But——"

"What's it for?"

"Why, it's a church, petite."

"A church! And what's that to me?"

"Well, truly, I don't know, child. Nothing, I suppose."

"Nothing!"

She snapped her fingers contemptuously.

"Here is the Préfecture."

It was the Préfecture de Police and not Notre Dame that had to do with little Fouchette and her kind. She knew what the Préfecture was, though she now saw it for the first time. And she shivered in her wet rags as the carriage turned into the great courtyard surrounded by the immense stone quadrangle that fronts upon the quai.

A troop of the Garde de Paris was drilling at the upper end of the court. Sentinels with gay uniforms and fixed bayonets solemnly paraded at the three gateways.

"Come, petite," said the man, flinging open the carriage doors and lifting the child in his arms to the ground. The dog leaped out after her and looked uneasily up and down.

Half an hour later when Fouchette emerged with her conductor she had undergone a transformation

that would have rendered her unrecognizable in Charenton. She had not only been washed and combed and rubbed down, but had been arrayed in a frock of grayish material, a chip hat with flowers in it, and shoes and stockings. She was so excited over the grandeur of her personal appearance that she had completely lost her bearings. It is true the hat was too old for a child of her years, and the coarse new costume was several sizes too large for her bony little frame, and the shoes were very embarrassing, but to Fouchette they seemed the outfit of a " real lady."

She had entered the Préfecture sullenly, desperately, half expecting to be sent to a lonely cell and perhaps loaded with chains,—she had heard tell of such things,—and, instead, had been treated with kindness by a gentle matron, her body washed and clothed, her stomach made glad with rich soup and bread and milk, while Tartar was amply provided for before her own eyes.

Fouchette was still in a daze when she found herself again in the closed carriage, with Tartar at her feet, being whirled away at a pace that seemed to threaten the lives of everybody in the streets. The same man sat beside her, and an extra man had, at the last moment, clambered up by the side of the driver.

This furious speed was continued for a long time, until Fouchette began to wonder more and more where they were going. She could not recognize anything en route, and the man was now serious and taciturn.

All at once she saw that they were approaching the

barrier. Things looked differently from a carriage window, and yet there was a familiar air about the surroundings.

The man noticed her uneasiness and pulled down the blinds.

A terrible fear now seized her. Were they going to take her back to the Podvins?

This fear increased as the speed of the vehicle lessened and as Tartar began to move about impatiently. He was trying to get his nose under the curtain.

"Hold him down!" said the man in a low voice. He was afraid to touch the dog himself.

"Oh, monsieur!" she finally exclaimed, "we are not going to—to——"

"The Rendez-Vous pour Cochers, my little Fouchette," he put in, with a smile.

"Oh, mon Dieu! Please, monsieur! Take me anywhere else,—back to the Préfecture—to prison—anywhere but to this place! They'll kill me! Oh, they'll kill me, monsieur!"

"Bah! No, they won't, little one. We'll take care of that."

"But——"

"Besides," he continued, reassuringly, "we're not going to leave you there, so don't be afraid. Maybe you won't have to get out, or be seen even, if you do as I tell you. Have no fear."

"Mon Dieu! monsieur does not know. They'll kill you, too!"

"No, they won't. And I know all about them, my child. There are four of us, and—— Keep the dog down till I open the door."

The carriage had stopped.

"Stay right where you are," he whispered. "Let the dog out."

Tartar could not have been held in by both of them. He jumped to the ground with joyous barks of recognition.

It was now ten o'clock, and the usual odors of a Parisian second breakfast permeated the atmosphere of the cabaret.

Four or five rough-looking men were lounging about, gossiping over their absinthe or apératif. Monsieur Podvin was already, at this early hour in the day, on his second bottle of ordinaire. Opposite, as usual, sat le Cochon.

Madame Podvin was busily burnishing up the zinc bar, and the vigorous and spiteful way in which she did this betrayed the fact that she was in bad temper. She was reserving an extra force of pent-up wrath against the moment when that "lazy little beast Fouchette" should put in an appearance.

Monsieur Podvin was also irritated, but not because of Fouchette's prolonged absence. He was concerned about Tartar.

Le Cochon sympathized with both of them.

Among the various theories offered for these disappearances madame thought that Fouchette was simply playing truant. The dog did not bother her calculation, as he would not share the punishment.

Monsieur was certain that the girl had enticed the dog away from home; though why she had taken her basket and hook if she were not coming back he could not say.

Le Cochon took a gloomy view of it. He was afraid some accident had befallen her,—she might have got run over by a fiacre, or have fallen into the river.

"Nonsense!" protested M. Podvin. "The dog would come home. He wouldn't get run over too, and you couldn't drown a spaniel."

It was precisely at this moment that the loud barking of Tartar broke upon their ears, confirming his master's judgment and sending a thrill through everybody in the room. This sensation, however, was by no means the same.

The brute master alone rejoiced for pure love of the dog and for the dog's sake.

Madame Podvin went in search of a certain stout strap used upon Fouchette on special occasions of ceremonial penological procedure.

Two strange men seated at some distance from each other, and who up to that moment had ignored each other's existence, exchanged looks of intelligence and rose as if to leave the place.

Le Cochon alone seemed disconcerted. His beetle brows clouded, and his right hand involuntarily sought the handle of his knife.

The instincts of the robber were this time unerring. For Tartar had scarcely licked the dirty hand of his master, when his eyes fell upon the would-be murderer of his beloved mistress. The sight appeared to startle the animal at first. But only for a second. Then, with a growl of rage that began low and ominously, like the first notes of a thunder-storm, and swelled into a howl, the spaniel sprang upon the villain and fastened his fangs in his fleshy throat.

CHAPTER III

THE onset was so sudden and swift, and the animal had received such a powerful impetus from his spring, that the burly robber went down with a tremendous crash.

Man and dog rolled together in the dirt, upsetting tables and chairs and raising a terrible uproar. The desperate wretch plunged his knife again and again into the body of the enraged spaniel; the latter only clinched his teeth tighter and endeavored to tear his enemy by main brute strength.

Madame Podvin, having been diverted from her original purpose by this unexpected mêlée, set up a scream that would have drowned an active calliope.

"That's our bird!" shouted the man who had been serving as Fouchette's footman.

Whereupon his partner and the two agents from the Préfecture who had been waiting within fell upon the struggling pair.

It was all over in a few seconds.

Yet within that brief period Tartar lay dead from a knife-thrust in the heart, and the robber was extended alongside of his victim, his hands securely manacled upon his back.

"Hold on, gentlemen!" broke in M. Podvin at this juncture, having found his voice for the first time, "what does this mean?"

"It means, my dear Podvin, that this amiable gentleman, who has always been so handy with his knife, is wanted at the Préfecture——"

"And that you are politely requested to accompany

him," added the other Central man, tapping M. Podvin on the shoulder.

"But, que diable!"

"Come! Madame will conduct the business all right, no doubt, while her patriot husband serves the State."

"That cursed dog has finished me," growled the prostrate robber. "C'est égal! I've done for him and F—— If it had only been one of you, curse you!"

This benevolent wish was addressed to the police agent who was at that moment engaged in binding up the horrible wound in the man's throat. Both were drenched with blood, partly from the dog and partly from the man. Le Cochon had been assisted to a sitting posture, sullen, revengeful, with murder in his black heart.

All at once his inflamed eyes rested upon something in the doorway. At first it was but casually, then fixedly, while the bloated face turned ashen.

He started to rise to his feet, and would have warded off the apparition with his hands, only they were laced in steel behind him, then, with a deep groan of terror, pitched forward upon his face, senseless.

It was Fouchette.

The others turned towards the doorway to see,—there was nothing there.

Cowering for a few moments in the darkest corner of the carriage, she had heard the voice of Tartar raised in anger, followed by the tumult. The latter she had anticipated with fear and trembling. She had divined at the last moment that these were agents of the police, and that the object was arrests. The noise

of combat roused her fighting blood, the silence that so soon followed heated her curiosity to the boiling-point. It was intolerable. Perhaps the agents were being killed. The suspense was dreadful. She felt that she could not endure it another second.

The man had ordered her to remain in the carriage. The blinds were down; the coachman stood on the side next to the cabaret.

Come what might, she must know. So Fouchette slipped softly out on the opposite side and sneaked swiftly around the horses' heads.

The coachman on guard was for the same moment completely wrapped up in the riot that had been going on inside the Rendez-Vous pour Cochers; he saw the child just as she reached the doorway, and then he made a dash for her, grabbed her, and put her back in the carriage.

Thus, it so happened that but a single pair of eyes within had seen Fouchette, and these eyes belonged to the man who believed her to be dead.

It was for the purpose of the identification of her assailant that Fouchette had been brought to the Rendez-Vous pour Cochers. Tartar had spared her that trouble, though it was for quite another reason that le Cochon fell into the grip of the police.

The latter had experienced no difficulty in identifying Fouchette in spite of her obstinate silence. As she had come down the river from outside the barrier, it was clear that she made her living in some river suburb. A telephonic inquiry brought not only immediate confirmation from the authorities at Charenton, but had elicited the important details that brought the

specials from the Préfecture down upon the suspected cabaret. In the man described as "le Cochon" the officials at once recognized a notorious escaped convict.

It was not until Fouchette was on her way back to the Préfecture that it was learned that in their prisoner, le Cochon, they also had an assassin who up to this moment had eluded arrest.

When the agent had informed her of the death of Tartar she was first overcome with grief. The sense of her utter loneliness rushed upon her. She wept convulsively. Her sorrow was bitter and profound.

"Cheer up, my child; don't give way like that."

Her companion tried now and then to comfort her in his rough way.

"Ah, monsieur! but he was the only friend I had in the world!" she sobbed.

"There, there!" he said, soothingly; "you'll have more friends. You'll be taken care of all right."

"I don't care what becomes of me, now poor Tartar's gone! He loved me! Nobody will ever love me like he did,—never!"

But when she had recovered from this tempest of tears it was to succumb to a tempest of wrath.

"That wretch! I'll see him under the razor!" she exclaimed, meaning the guillotine. "He tried to drown me, the assassin! Yes, I know him for an assassin,—a murderer! It was he who pushed me into the river!"

"Oho!"

"It is true! That man is a fiend,—an assassin! I am ready to tell everything, monsieur! Everything!"

Not for love of truth,—not for fear of law,—but for the love of a dog.

In this mood she was encouraged by all the wiles and insinuating ways known to the professional student of human nature. So that, when Fouchette reached the Préfecture, she had not only imparted valuable information, she had astounded her official auditor. Not altogether by what she had revealed, but quite as much by her precocious cleverness and judgment.

She was taken at once before Inspector Loup, of the Secret Service.

Fouchette was not in the least intimidated when she found herself closeted alone with this mighty personage. For she did not know the extraordinary power wielded by Inspector Loup, and was in equal ignorance of the stenographer behind the screen. She was thinking only of her revenge. She had sworn, mentally, to have the head of le Cochon. She would see him writhing under the guillotine. Not because he had tried to drown her,—she would never have betrayed him for that,—but because he had murdered her dog. She would have vengeance. She would have overlooked his cowardly butchery of a stranger in the wood of Vincennes; but for the killing of Tartar she was ready and eager to see the head of le Cochon fall in the Place de la Roquette.

Therefore Fouchette confronted Inspector Loup intent upon her own wrongs, and with a face which might have been deemed impudent but for its premature hardness.

Inspector Loup was a tall, thin man, with small,

keen, fishy eyes,—so small they seemed like beads, all pupil, so keen they glistened like diamonds, so fishy they appeared to swim round in two heavily fringed ponds. And they were always swimming,—indolently, as if it were not really worth while, but still leaving the vague and sometimes uncomfortable impression that they were on you, under you, around you, through you; that they were weighing you, analyzing you, and knew what was in your mind and stomach, as well as the contents of your inside pockets.

It was the habit of Inspector Loup to turn these peculiar orbs upon whoever came under his personal jurisdiction for a minute or two without uttering a word, though usually before that time had expired the individual had succumbed to their mysterious influence and was ready to make a clean breast of it.

Their awful influence upon the wrongdoer was intensified by the softness of his insinuating voice, that seemed to pry down into human secrets as a sort of intellectual jimmy, delicate but powerful, and by the noiselessness of his tread, which had the effect of creeping upon his victim preparatory to the final spring.

In other words, Inspector Loup accomplished by moral force what others believed possible only to physical intimidation. Yet those law-breakers who had presumed too much upon his gentleness had invariably come to grief, and Inspector Loup had reached his present confidential position through thrilling experiences that had left his lank body covered with honorable scars.

Inspector Loup was practically chief of the Secret

System,—or, rather, was director of that system under the eye of the Minister of the Interior. He had served a dozen ministries. He had adopted the great Fouché as a standard, and no government could change quicker than Inspector Loup could. If he had been of the Napoleonic period he might have rivalled his distinguished model. As it was, he did as well as was possible with the weak governing material with which France was afflicted.

The word "spy" being obnoxious in all languages and at all times and in all places, the myriad smaller particles of the Secret System were called "Agents."

The Paris "agent" of this class has, happily, no counterpart in the American government. Our "detectives," or "plain clothes men," are limited to legitimate police duties in the discovery of crime and prosecution of criminals. They are known, are borne on pay-rolls, usually have good character and some official standing.

The Paris "agent" is a widely different individual, speaking of that branch not in uniform and not regularly employed on routine work. This class is formed of government employés, all persons holding government licenses of any kind, all keepers of public-houses and places of public resort subject to government inspection, returned convicts under police surveillance, criminals under suspension of sentence, all persons under the eye of the police subject to arrest for one thing or another, or who may be intimidated.

Add to these the regular service men and women, then bear in mind that the names of all "agents" are secure from public knowledge, even of a military

court, that they can stab in the dark and never be held accountable by their victims, and that appropriations are made in bulk for this service without an accounting, and you will then understand the full strength and appreciate the unique infamy of the French Secret System.

"Eh, bien?"

Inspector Loup had finished his inspection of the childish figure before him and was compelled to break the ice.

"Eh, bien, monsieur; it is me."

An obstinate silence ensued.

"Well, what do you want?" finally inquired the inspector, in a tone that clearly implied that, whatever it was, she would not get it.

"Nothing," she replied.

"Then what are you here for?"

"Because I was brought."

"Oh!"

"Yes, monsieur."

"Well, now you are here——"

"Yes?"

"What have you got to say?"

"Nothing."

"Que diable! child, no fencing!"

Another awkward silence, during which each coolly surveyed the other.

"Why don't you speak?"

"About what?"

"Yourself."

"Of what good is it to speak?" she asked, simply, —"monsieur knows."

"Indeed!"

This child was breaking the record. Inspector Loup contemplated her petite personality once more. Here was a rare diplomate.

"You are called Fouchette?" he said.

"Yes, mon——"

"You come from Nantes. No; you don't remember. You were picked up in the streets by the Podvins and have been living with them ever since. Fouchette is the name they gave you. It is not your real name. You are ostensibly a ragpicker, but are the consort and associate of thieves and robbers and assassins, who have used you as well as abused you. You are suspected to be a regular go-between for these and the receivers of stolen goods."

"M-monsieur!"

Truly, Monsieur l'Inspecteur knew more of her than she did.

"And I know that it is true. You would have been arrested in the act the next trip. This ruffian, so-called le Cochon, threw you in the river with the intention of drowning you. You were rescued through the sagacity and devotion of a dog. Both this man le Cochon and Podvin have been arrested. There are others——"

"There are others," repeated Fouchette.

"Which you——"

"I know."

"Well?"

"The dead man of the wood of Vincennes—last year. Did they ever find the one who did that?"

"No."

"Le Cochon!"

"Ah!"

"Very sure."

"You saw it?"

"Oh, no. I heard them talking."

"Who?"

"Monsieur Podvin and le Cochon."

"Go on, mon enfant; you grow interesting at last."

"Monsieur Podvin was very angry because of it. They quarrelled. I heard them from my bed in the cellar. The man had resisted,—over a few sous, think! And Monsieur Podvin said it was not worth while, for so little, to bring the police down on the neighborhood. It spoiled business. For the twelve sous Monsieur Podvin said he'd lose a thousand francs."

"M. Podvin was undoubtedly right."

"Yes; but le Cochon said it was worth a thousand francs to hear the man squeal."

"So!"

"Yes. And then Monsieur Podvin wanted to take it out of his share."

"So?"

"Yes; and so they quarrelled dreadfully."

"And Madame Podvin,—she heard this?"

"Madame is not deaf, monsieur."

"Ah!"

"She was at the zinc."

"Truly, Madame Podvin may become of value," muttered Inspector Loup.

"Monsieur?"

"Oh! And so you've kept this to your little self all this time. Why?"

"I was afraid; then——"

"I understand. But you got bravely over all this as soon as this miscreant undertook to put you out of the way, eh?"

"It was not that, monsieur, for what I would be avenged."

"So you confess to the motive?"

"I would surely be revenged, monsieur," she avowed, frankly.

"A mighty small woman, but still a woman, and sure Française," observed the inspector.

"He killed my only friend, monsieur."

"What! Another murder? Le Cochon?"

"Yes."

"Très bien! Go on, mon enfant; you grow more and more interesting!"

"It was only this morning, monsieur," said the child, again reminded of her irreparable loss.

"This morning, eh? The report is not yet in.—There, now, don't blubber, little one.—Another murder for le Cochon! Pardieu! we shall have his head!"

"Truly?" Fouchette brightened up immediately at this prospect.

"The infamous wretch!"

"Yes; go on, monsieur. You grow more interesting!"

"What an infernally impudent child!" observed the inspector to himself, yet aloud.

"Monsieur?"

"What—how about this morning's murder?"

"Le Cochon's dreadful knife! Oh! I would love to see him strapped to the plank and his head in the basket! Yes, ten thousand curses on——"

"Là! là! là! Mon Dieu! will you never get on? Who was le Cochon's victim this time?"

"Tartar, monsieur,—yes! Ah! Oh!"

"Tartar? Tartar? Why, that's the name of——"

"Yes, monsieur, the dog! Poor Tartar!"

"So le Cochon killed your dog, eh?"

"Yes, monsieur," sobbed Fouchette.

Monsieur l'Inspecteur was silent for a while, thoughtfully regarding the grieving child with his fishy eyes.

"After all, it was murder," he said. "Had this man committed no other crime, he deserves death for having killed such a noble beast."

"Ah! thank you, monsieur! Thank you very much!"

Having established this happy entente, Inspector Loup and Fouchette entered into a long and interesting conversation,—interesting especially to the chief of the Secret System.

When the interview was over Fouchette was led away almost quite happy. Happier, at least, than she had ever been,—far happier than she had ever hoped to be. First, she had been promised her revenge; second, she was neither to go back to the Rendez-Vous pour Cochers nor to be turned into the street; third, she was to be sent to a beautiful retreat outside of Paris, where she would be taught to read and write and be brought up as a lady.

It seemed to the child that this was too good to be

true. The country, in her imagination, was the source and foundation of all real happiness. There was nothing in cities,—nothing but dust and crowds, and human selfishness and universal hardness of heart, and toil and misery.

In the country was freedom and independence. She had tasted it in her furtive morning excursions in the wood of Vincennes. Tartar had loved the country. The woods, the fields, and the flowers,—to range among them daily, openly and without fear, would be heaven!

To the Parisian all outside of Paris is country.

And to learn to read and to write and understand the newspapers and what was in books!

Yes, it seemed really too much, all at once. For of all other things coveted in this world, Fouchette deemed such a knowledge most desirable. Up to this moment it had been beyond the ordinary flight of her youthful imagination. It was one of the impossibilities,—like flying and finding a million of money. But now it had come to her. She might know something she had never seen, or of which she had never heard.

To accomplish all of this and to be in the country at the same time, what more could anybody wish?

Yet she was to have more. The inspector,—what was this wonderful man, anyhow, who knew everything and could do anything?—he, the inspector, had promised it. She was to have human kindness and love!

The inspector was a nice gentleman. And the agents,—it was all a lie about the agents de police. They were all nice men. She had hated and dreaded

them; and had they not been good to her? Had they not taken her from the river and fed her and clothed her and visited with swift punishment those who had cruelly abused her?

Fouchette was learning rapidly. The change was so confusing, and events had chased one another so unceremoniously, that she must be pardoned if she grasped new ideas with more tenacity than accuracy. It is what all of us are doing day by day.

* * * * * * *

It was a long distance by rail.

Fouchette had never dreamed that a railroad could be so long and that the woods and fields with which her mind had been recently filled could become so monotonous and tedious. Even the towns and villages,—of which she had never heard,—that were interesting at first, soon became stupid and tiresome. She had long ceased to notice them particularly, her mind being naturally filled with thoughts of the place to which she was going, and where her whole future seemed to lay yet undeveloped. She finally fell into a sound sleep.

The next thing she knew was that she was roughly shaken by the shoulder, and a voice cried, somewhat impatiently,—

"Come, come! What a little sleepyhead!"

It was that of a "religieuse," or member of a religious order, and its possessor was a stout, ruddy-faced woman of middle life, garbed in solemn black, against which sombre background the white wings of her homely headpiece and the white apron, over which dangled a cross, looked still more white and glaring than they were.

Another woman in the same glaring uniform, though less robust and quite colorless as to face, stood near by on the station platform.

"Bring her things, sister,—if she has anything."

Following these instructions, the red-faced woman rummaged in the netting overhead with one hand while she pulled Fouchette from her corner with the other.

"Come, petite! Is this all you've got, child?"

"Yes, madame," replied the child, respectfully, but with a sinking heart.

"So this is Fouchette, eh?" said the white-faced woman, as her companion joined her with the child and her little bundle.

"Yes, madame," faltered Fouchette.

But for the eyes, which were large and dark and luminous, and which seemed to grasp the object upon which they rested and to hold it in physical embrace, the face might have been that of the dead, so ghastly and rigid and unnatural it was.

"She's not much, very sure," observed the other, turning Fouchette around by the slender shoulder.

"She'll never earn her salt," said the pale-faced sister.

Fouchette noticed that her lips were apparently bloodless and that she scarcely moved them as she spoke.

"Not for long, anyhow," responded the other, with a significance Fouchette did not then understand.

Without other preliminary they led Fouchette down the platform.

"Where's your ticket?" asked the white-faced woman, coldly.

Fouchette nervously searched the bosom of her dress. In France the railway ticket is surrendered at the point where the journey ceases, as the traveller leaves the station platform.

"Sainte Marie!" exclaimed the ruddy-faced sister, —"lost it, I'll wager!"

"Where on earth did you put it, child?"

"Here, madame," said the latter, still fumbling and not a little frightened at the possible consequences of losing the bit of cardboard. "Ah! here—no, it isn't. Mon Dieu!"

"Fouchette!"

The voice of the pale religieuse was stern, though her face rested perfectly immobile, no matter what she said.

"Let me see——"

"Search, Sister Agnes."

The ruddy-faced woman obeyed by plunging her fat hand down the front of the child's dress, where she fished around vigorously but unsuccessfully.

"Nothing but bones!" she ejaculated.

Meanwhile, everybody else had left the platform, and the gatekeeper was growing impatient.

Sister Agnes was a practical woman. She wound up her fruitless search by shaking the child, as if the latter were a plum-tree and might yield over-ripe railway tickets from its branches.

It did. The ticket dropped to the platform from beneath the loose-fitting dress.

"There it is!" cried the gatekeeper.

"Stupid little beast!"

And Sister Agnes shook her again, although, as there were no more tickets, the act seemed quite superfluous.

Outside the station waited a sort of carryall, or van, drawn by a single horse, which turned his aged head to view the new-comer, as did also the driver.

"Oh! so you're coming, eh?" said the latter.

"Yes,—long enough!" grumbled Sister Agnes.

They had driven some distance through the streets of a big town without a word, when the last speaker addressed her companion in a low voice.

"You noted the ticket?"

"Yes."

Another silence.

"I don't see what they sent her to us for, do you?"

"That is for the Supérieure."

A still longer silence.

"It's a pity," continued Sister Agnes.

"Yes, they ought to go to the House of Correction."

"These Parisian police——"

"Chut!"

But they need not have taken even this little precaution before Fouchette. She had long been lost in the profound depths of her own gloomy thoughts. In her isolation she required but a single, simple thing to render her happy,—a thing which costs nothing,—something of which there is an abundance and to spare in the world, thank God!—and that was a little show of kindness.

The child was not very sensitive to bad treatment. To that she was inured; but she had tasted the sweets

of kindness, and it had inspired hopes that already began to wither, encouraged dreams that had already vanished.

Fouchette was fast falling into her habitual state of childish cynicism. The police had tricked her, no doubt. She was more than suspicious of this as she noted their approach towards a pile of buildings surrounded by a high wall, which reminded her of La Roquette. This wall had great iron spikes and broken glass bottles set in cement on top, and seemed to stretch away out of sight in the growing shadows of evening. Once proceeding parallel with the wall, the buildings beyond were no longer visible to those outside.

They stopped in front of an immense arched gateway, apparently of the mediæval period, with a porter's lodge on one side, slightly recessed. The gates were of stout oak thickly studded with big-headed nails and bolts. In the heavy oaken door of the lodge was set a brass "judas," a small grille closed by an inner slide, and which might be operated by an unseen hand within so as to betray the identity of any person outside without unbarring the door,—a not uncommon arrangement in French gates and outside doors.

If Fouchette had not been restricted by the sides and top of the van, she might have seen the words "Le Bon Pasteur" carved in the ancient stone above the great gateway. But, inasmuch as she could not have read the inscription, and would not have been able to understand it in any case, it was no great matter.

The driver of the van got down and let fall the old-fashioned iron knocker. The judas showed a

glistening eye for a second, then closed. This was immediately followed by a slipping of bolts and a clanging of iron bars, and then the big gates swung inward. They appeared to do this without human aid, and shut again in the same mysterious way when the vehicle had passed.

"Supper, thank goodness!" said Sister Agnes, with a sigh.

"You're always hungry——"

"Prettly nearly."

"Always thinking of something to eat," continued the other, reprovingly. "It is not a good example to the young, sister. The carnal appetite, it is a sin, my sister, to flatter it!"

"Dame! As if one could possibly be open to such a charge here!" retorted the ruddy-faced Agnes.

"We are taught to restrain,—mortify,—pluck out, —cut off the offending member. It is——"

"But what are we going to do with this child, Sister Angélique?" interrupted Sister Agnes, and abruptly shutting off the religious enthusiast. "She must be hungry. And the Supérieure——"

"Cannot be disturbed at this hour. In the morning is time enough for an unpleasant subject. Take her to No. 17,—it is prepared,—in the right lower corridor."

"Sainte Marie!" cried Sister Agnes, crossing herself, "as if I didn't know! Why, I was taken to that cell myself when I came here forty years ago!"

"Perhaps, and have never had reason to regret it, quite surely. But take this child there. Let her begin her new life with fasting and prayer, as you doubtless

did, sister. It will serve to fit her to come before the Supérieure in the morning with the humble spirit of one who is to receive so much and who, evidently, can give so little."

Fouchette was so bewildered with her surroundings that she paid little attention to what was being said. The great irregular piles of buildings, the going and coming of the ghostly figures, the silence, impressed her vividly. Of the nearest building, she could see that the windows were grated with iron bars; her ears registered the word "cell." Fouchette did not understand what was meant by the expression "fasting and prayer," but she had a definite idea of a "cell" in a house with grated windows within a high wall.

"Come! hurry up, my child; I want my supper. Yes, and I'll see that they treat you better than they did me. Come this way! Yes,—mon Dieu! Mortify the flesh! Flatter the carnal appetite!"

She muttered continuously, as she led Fouchette along a dark corridor with which her feet were familiar.

"Forty years! Ah! Mother of God! Pluck it out! Cut it off! Blessed Sainte Agnes, give me patience! Forty years! Holy Mother, pardon me! Forty years! Yes! Reason to regret? May the good God forgive me!—Here we are, my child."

She suddenly stopped and turned a key, opened a door, thrust the child within, and paused to look around, as if pursuing her reminiscences, oblivious of everything else.

It was a plain cell, such as was used by the early

monks when this building was a monastery, possibly nine by six feet, with a high, small, grated hole for the only light and air. A narrow iron cot, a combination stand, and a low stool constituted the sole furniture. A rusty iron crucifix in the middle of the wall opposite the bed was the only decoration. The rest was blank stone, staring white with crumbling whitewash.

Stone floor, stone walls, stone ceiling,—cold, clammy, cheerless.

The floor was worn into a smooth, shallow furrow lengthwise, showing where countless weary inmates had paced up and down, up and down, during the long hours. And beneath the crucifix were scooped out two round hollows in the solid rock, where countless knees had bent in recognition of the Christ.

The religieuse seemed to forget the presence of Fouchette, for she dropped upon her own knees in the little hollows in the cold stone floor beneath the rusty iron crucifix on the wall.

"Oh, pardon, my child!" she exclaimed, coming back to the present as she arose from prayer, "I forgot. Forty years ago,—it comes upon me here."

She gently removed the little hat with its cheap flowers, then bent over and kissed the thin cheeks, promising to return soon with something to eat.

Fouchette heard the door close, the key grate harshly in the lock.

The moisture of the lips and eyes remained upon her cheeks. She felt it still warm, and involuntarily put up both hands, as if to further convince herself that the kisses were real and to hold them there.

The Christ was to her a myth, the crucifix a vague superstition, prayer a mere unmeaning mummery. But the kisses were tangible and easily understood.

But oh! the country!—the woods! the fields! the flowers!—freedom!

She threw herself on the iron cot and wept passionately.

CHAPTER IV

"Là, là, là!" came the cheery but subdued voice of Sister Agnes. She had re-entered the cell to catch the last faint sounds of childish grief coming out of the darkness.

"There! Softly now, petite! Where are you? Oh! If they catch me here at this hour and bringing—sh!"

The good-hearted woman had groped her way to the cot, raised Fouchette to a sitting posture, and, sitting down by her side, pulled the child over in her arms.

Fouchette, who had almost ceased to weep by this time, was at once overcome anew by the motherly caress and broke down completely. She flung her arms wildly about Sister Agnes's neck and buried her face in the ample bosom.

"Là, là, là, là! my little skeleton, there is nothing to be afraid of here. Nothing at all! Don't take on so. God is everywhere, and takes care of us in the night as well as by day. Fear not! And here, my child, see what I've brought you! Feel, rather,—taste; you must be half starved. Here is a big, fat sandwich, and here's another. And here's a small flacon of the red wine of Bourgogne. You poor child! You need something for blood. Here's a bit of cheese, too, and, let's see,—by the blessed Sainte! I was told to let you have bread and water and I've actually forgotten the water!

"Now eat! The idea of a big girl like you being afraid in the dark!"

"No, it was not that, madame. Mon Dieu, no! I'm used to that. Indeed, I'm not afraid. It——"

"Then what on earth have you been crying about, child?"

"Oh, madame! it is because—because you are so good to me. Yes, that is it. I'm not used to that,—no!"

Sister Agnes must have been quite agitated by this frank and unexpected avowal, for she pressed the child to her with still greater fervor, kissing her time and again more affectionately, after which she immediately slipped into the religious rut again below the crucifix.

A single ray of moonlight from the high loophole in the wall fell athwart the sombre cell and rested caressingly upon her bowed head as she knelt and seemed to bless her.

When she had recovered her self-possession she resumed her seat by the side of Fouchette, who, meanwhile, had been making havoc with the provisions.

"Oh! I was afraid—dreadfully afraid—that night, forty years ago," she whispered. "It was in this same place. And when they left me I almost cried my eyes out—and screamed,—how I screamed! Yet no one came. The next morning I had bread and water. And the next night and day, too. Ah! Sainte Mère de Dieu! how I suffered!"

Fouchette shuddered.

"And I was a strong, healthy child, but wilful; yet the dark seemed terrible to me—because I was wicked."

Fouchette wondered what dreadful crime this child

of forty years ago had committed to have been thus treated. She must have been very, very wicked.

"Yes, forty years ago——"

"How much did they give you, madame?"

"Er—what's that, petite?"

"Pardon, madame, but how much time yet do you have to serve?"

"I don't understand," replied the puzzled woman, unfamiliar with worldly terms.

"Why, I mean, how long did they send you up for?" asked the child.

"Send?—they?—who?"

"The police."

"Police? Mon Dieu! my child, the police had nothing to do with me."

"Well, the gendarmes."

"The gendarmes?"

"No; you could never have been guilty, madame! Never! Whatever it was they charged you with——"

"Charged? Sainte Marie be praised, I never committed any crime in my life,—unless it was a crime to be thoughtless and happy."

"I was sure of that!" cried Fouchette, much relieved nevertheless.

"Why, I never was charged with any!" protested the astonished Sister Agnes.

"Then they imprisoned you without trial, as they have me. Ah! mon Dieu! madame, I see it all now! And forty years! Oh!"

"Well, blessed be the saints in heaven!" exclaimed the enlightened religieuse. "What do you think this place is, Fouchette?"

"It is"—she hesitated and changed the form of speech—"is it a—a prison?"

"Why, no! Holy Mother, no!—not a prison, child! You thought it——"

"Yes, madame," faltered Fouchette.

"You poor child! Not so bad as that; yet——"

"I see,—a house of correction?"

"No, not that. At least, not—ah! if Sister Angélique had heard you call 'Le Bon Pasteur' a house of correction it would have been worth three days of bread and water!"

"'Le Bon Pasteur?'" repeated Fouchette.

"Yes, my child. Didn't you really know——"

"No, madame."

Sister Agnes pondered.

"Then why should you remain here?" pursued the curious child. "Can't you go away if you want to?"

"But I do not wish to go now,—not now."

"But if you had wished it at any time."

Sister Agnes was silent.

"Then what is this place, madame?"

"A retreat for the poor,—an orphan asylum,—where little girls who have neither father nor mother, and no home, are sent. And where they are brought up to be good and industrious young women."

"D-don't they ever get out again?" asked Fouchette, somewhat doubtfully.

"Oh, yes. They are set free at twenty-one years of age if they wish to go, and even sooner if their friends come for them. If they don't wish to go, they can remain and become members of the order, if they are suitable. I was brought here at ten years of age by

my aunt and left temporarily, but my uncle died and she was too poor, or else did not want me, so I was compelled to remain. When I became twenty-one I owed the institution so much from failure to do my tasks and fines, and what my aunt had promised to pay and didn't pay, that I had to stay a long time and work it out, and by that time I had become so accustomed to living here that I was afraid to leave the institution and begged them to let me become one of the community.

"Sometimes girls are bad and so lazy they won't work, and then they are punished. And when they prove incorrigible they are put in the other building, which is a house of correction. But if a girl is good and obedient and industrious she has no trouble, and may save up money against the day when she is set at liberty, besides receives the good recommendation of the Supérieure, on which she may find honest employment."

While the good Sister Agnes spoke truly, she dared not tell this child the whole truth.

She dared not say that Le Bon Pasteur,—The Good Shepherd,—although ostensibly a charitable institution, under religious auspices and subsidized by the State, for the protection and education of orphan girls during their minority, was practically a great factory which did not come under the legal restrictions governing free labor in France, and where several hundred girls and young women, whose only offence against society had been to lose their natural protectors, were subjected to all the rigors of the most benighted penal institutions.

She dared not warn this poor little novice that her commitment to The Good Shepherd was equivalent to a sentence of nine years at hard labor; that good conduct and industry would not earn a day from that term, but that bad conduct, neglect, or inability to perform allotted tasks would result not only in severe punishments but an extension of imprisonment indefinitely, at the pleasure of those who reaped the financial reward from the product of the sweat of the orphans.

She dared not notify this frail waif that these tasks of the needle were measured by the ability of the most expert, and that the majority of girls were obliged to work overtime in order to accomplish them; that to many this was an impossibility, and to some death.

She dared not add to her recital of the money that might be earned and saved up against the day of liberty that comparatively few were able to perform the extra work necessary; that fines and charges of all kinds were resorted to in order to reduce such earnings to minimum; and that at the close of her nine years of hard labor for Le Bon Pasteur the most she could expect was to be thrust into the street in the clothes she wore, without a cent, without a friend, without a shelter.

She dared not more than hint at the terrible alternatives placed before these young women from their long isolation from the world,—to remain here prisoners for life, or to cast themselves into the seething hell of Paris.

More than all, she dared not add that all of this was done in a so-called republic, in the name of Civiliza-

tion, to the glory of modern Religion, in love of the Redeemer.

Fouchette would learn all of this quite soon enough through her own observation and experience. Why needlessly embitter her present?

And this was well. Besides, the religieuse was ashamed to admit these things, as she would have been afraid to deny them, being divided between the vows of her order and her own private conscience.

Sister Agnes was a plain, honest woman of little sentiment, but this little had been curiously awakened in her breast by the coincidence of the time and place which had recalled minutely the circumstances of her own entrance to the institution.

She had unconsciously adopted Fouchette from that moment. She mentally resolved that she would keep an eye on this child. If it could be so managed, Fouchette should come into her section. And, since the child was ignorant and ambitious, she should receive whatever advantages of instruction were to be had.

Quick to respond to this sympathy, Fouchette, on her part, mentally resolved to deserve it. She would be good and obedient, so that the sweet lady would love her and continue to kiss her. How could girls be wicked if all the women of the community of Le Bon Pasteur were like Sister Agnes?

And it would have been quite unnatural and unchildlike, owing to the marked improvement in her condition, if Fouchette had not gone to sleep forgetting her earlier disappointment.

* * * * * * *

Five years in such a place are as one year,—the same monotonous daily grind in oblivion of the great world outside,—and need not be dwelt upon here beyond a brief reference to its results upon Fouchette's character, when we must hurry the reader on to more eventful scenes.

In this life of seclusion there were three saving features in Fouchette's case. First, its worst conditions were very much better than those under which she had formerly lived; second, she had been torn from no family or friendly ties which might have weighed upon her fancy; third, but not least, there was the love of Sister Agnes.

The petite chiffonnière's ideas of life had been cast in a lowly and humble mould, so that from the beginning these new surroundings seemed highly satisfactory, if not in many respects absolutely joyous. For instance, the beds were prison beds, but they were clean and the dormitories fairly well ventilated,—luxury to one who was accustomed to sleep in a noisome cellar on filthy and envermined straw. The food was coarse and frugal, but it was regular and almost prodigal to one habituated to disputing her breakfast with vagrant dogs. The clothes were coarse and cheap and often shabby, but to the child of rags they were equivalent to royal gowns. The discipline was severe, but it was unadulterated kindness by the side of the brutality of the Podvin.

The society of respectable young girls of her own age, and constant contact with those who were older and of superior birth and breeding, opened up a new world to Fouchette. That these companions were

more or less partakers of similar misfortunes engendered ready sympathies, though the feeling of caste was as powerful among these orphans of the State as in the Boulevard St. Germain. Tacitly acknowledging the lowly origin of the rag-heap, Fouchette was content to fag, to go and come, fetch and carry, and to patiently endure the multitude of petty tyrannies put upon her. She accepted this position from the start as a matter of course.

But it was chiefly in the daily intercourse with the cheerful, ruddy-faced, and rather worldly as well as womanly Sister Agnes that Fouchette found life worth living. It was Sister Agnes who patiently instructed her in the mysteries of reading and writing and spelling and the simple rudiments of language and figures. Sister Agnes smoothed her young protégée's pathway through a sea of new difficulties. Sister Agnes had secret struggles of her own, and had worn away considerable stone before the image of the Virgin in the course of her seclusion; though precisely what the nature of her private troubles was must have been known to nobody else. Sister Agnes was not a favorite with the Supérieure, apparently, since every time she was called before that dreaded female functionary she seemed much agitated and held longer conferences with the image of the Virgin in the little bare chapel. Whatever her mental and moral disturbances, however, Sister Agnes never faltered in her attention to Fouchette.

For the most part these were surreptitious, though to the recipient there did not appear to be any reason for this concealment. As one year followed another Fouchette saw more clearly, and it caused her to re-

double her exertions to please the good woman who risked the ill will of her superiors to shower kindnesses upon the otherwise friendless.

Five years to a girl of twelve brings considerable change physically as well as otherwise. The change in Fouchette was really wonderful. She remained still rather stunted and undersized at seventeen, though face and figure had developed to her advantage. The hardness of the first had not wholly disappeared, but it was much modified, while the bones no longer showed through her dress. Her blonde hair had become abundant, and, being of peculiar fineness and sheen, lent an attractiveness to features that only a slightly tigerish fulness of cheeks prevented from being almost classical. This feline expression of jaws became more marked when she smiled, when a rather large mouth displayed two rows of formidable teeth. The pussy-cat and monkey-faces are too common among the French to be called peculiar.

Her hands and feet were small, her frail body and limbs straight and supple as those of a young dancer. While she excelled at lively games in the great playground under the trees, her complexion was extremely delicate, even to paleness. Being naturally a clever imitator and always desirous of the good opinion of Sister Agnes, Fouchette had acquired graceful and lady-like manners that would have been creditable to any fashionable pension of Paris. Continuous happiness had left her light-hearted even to shallowness.

Fouchette latterly was not popular. She had been first a fag and drudge, then had been withdrawn from the work-room to serve in the kitchen; from scullery-

maid she had been promoted to the chambers of Sister Angélique, who was the stern right arm of the Supérieure; and, finally, was transferred to the holy of holies of the Supérieure herself.

All through her tractability and adaptability. She was quick to see what was wanted, and lent herself energetically to the task of performance. The good sisters encouraged her. Especially in bringing to them any stray ideas she had picked up among her companions. Sister Angélique, severe to fanaticism in all the forms of religion, early impressed upon the child the importance and imperative duty of the truth. It was not only a service to the community, but a service to the Church and to God for her to keep her superiors posted as to what was going on among the inmates of the institution.

It was a very trivial thing at first, then more trivial things,—mere gossip of children. Then her information resulted in the cell and paddle for the unfortunate and began to be talked about on the playground and in the work-room. When she heard what had happened, Fouchette was conscience-stricken and ran to Sister Agnes for consolation. The latter was so confused and contradictory in her definition of right and wrong, as to how far one might go for Christ's sake, that Fouchette was left in doubt. And when Sister Angélique asked her for the name of the girl who committed an offence in the dormitory, Fouchette hesitated and wanted to consult Sister Agnes.

The result was that Sister Agnes was called before the Supérieure, and was compelled to instruct Fouchette that whatever was required of her by those in

authority was right and should be done. It is a doctrine as universal as the Christian religion.

So Fouchette told, and the tale brought to the offender five days' diet of bread and water in a cell.

As a tale-bearer who was not afraid to tell the truth Fouchette had in the course of time ingratiated herself into the favor of Sister Angélique, and finally, as has been shown by her transfer to the governing regions, became the factotum of the Supérieure. These services carried privileges.

They also brought unpopularity. On the playground Fouchette began to be avoided. In the work-room voices suddenly became hushed as she passed. In the dormitory she began to experience coldness and hostile demonstrations.

Yet up to the present she had been suspected only. When the growing suspicion became a certainty she was assaulted in the dormitory in the presence of a matron. The biggest and stoutest girl of the section pulled her from her bed in the dark and began to beat her. There was no outcry at first,—only a silent struggle on the floor.

But the stout young woman had counted too much on her physical strength and upon the supposed weakness of her frail antagonist. For Fouchette was like a cat in another respect,—she fought best on her back, where she was all hands and feet and teeth. Before the fat matron could find them between the beds the big girl was yelling for mercy and the whole section of a hundred girls was in an uproar.

"Help! help!" screamed the girl. "She's murdering me!"

"Who? Where?"

"Silence!"

"Quick! Help! She's killing me! Fouchette! It's Mademoiselle Fouchette!"

The matron was thus guided to Fouchette's bed, where she found the latter tearing the big girl's ear with her teeth, and with her hands clawing the big girl's face.

To this moment Fouchette had not uttered a word. Then she let flow a torrent of language such as had never before been heard within the sacred precincts of Le Bon Pasteur. She could no more be stopped than an avalanche.

The girls of the dormitory closed their ears in their fright at this flood of profanity.

"Stop! stop! stop!" cried the matron, now overcome with horror. "You belong in the Reformatory! You shall go to the Reformatory! You shall have the bath and the paddle, you vile vixen!"

And Fouchette's vocabulary having been exhausted for the time being, she ceased.

Meanwhile, a light was brought, and attendants came running in from the other parts of the building.

Notwithstanding the confused explanation, and the fact that the aggressor's bed was at some distance from the spot where the two were discovered, which sustained the charge of Fouchette that the latter had been first attacked, the terrible condition of the big girl was such that Fouchette was sent to a cell and held in close confinement till the next evening.

She was then taken to Sister Angélique, where she

was examined as to her version of the occurrence. The victim of her nails and teeth also had a hearing.

Between the two, and considering all the circumstances, Sister Angélique came to the proper conclusion, and so reported the case to the Supérieure.

The latter had Fouchette brought before her. She was a very flabby and masculine woman, of great brains and keen penetration, and invariably had an oleaginous Jesuit priest at her elbow on important occasions to strengthen her religious standing and to give her decisions the force and effect of ecclesiastical law.

"Father Sébastien," said the Supérieure, "this is a grievous case. What are we to do with these girls that fight like tigers,—that set the whole blessed institution of Le Bon Pasteur by the ears?"

The Jesuit rubbed his hands, eying the slender figure before them curiously.

"A sad case,—a very sad case," he muttered; "and yet——"

"Mademoiselle Fouchette has been of good service to us, and——"

"And has invited this attack by her friendliness for the institution. No doubt,—no doubt at all," said the priest.

"But it is necessary to punish somebody," persisted the Supérieure, "else we shall lose control of these hotheads."

"How about the other one? Mademoiselle——"

"Mademoiselle Angot——"

"Yes."

"She's pretty well punished as it is. She looks as

if she had been through a threshing-machine. How such a chit could——"

Father Sébastien laughed, in his low, gurgling way, and rubbed his hands some more, still eying Fouchette.

"She's been a good girl for five years, you say?"

"Yes, Father; we could not complain."

"Five years is a very long time to—to—for a girl like her to be good. Is it not so?"

"Truly."

"And yet they say her language was dreadfully—er—ah—improper."

"If you were pulled out of bed in the night and beaten because you spoke the truth to the Supérieure," broke in Fouchette at this point, "you'd probably use bad language too!"

"Chut! child," said the Supérieure, smiling in spite of herself.

"Oh! me?"

"Là, là! Father." The Supérieure now laughed.

"Quite possibly," he added,—"quite possibly. But in a demoiselle like you——"

"I'm afraid to send her back to the dormitory. Are you afraid to go back there, Fouchette?"

"No, madame," replied Fouchette.

"I think they'll leave her alone after this," said the priest.

"They'd better," said Fouchette.

"Oho!"

"But you must not quarrel, my dear,—remember that. And if they—well, you come to me or to Sister——"

"Sister Agnes, yes——"

"No, no; Sister Angélique," interrupted the Supérieure, tartly. "Sister Agnes has nothing to do with you hereafter."

"Wh-at? But Sister Agnes——"

"Now don't stand there and argue. I repeat that Sister Agnes is to have nothing to do with you hereafter. Sister Agnes has gone——"

"Gone!"

It was the worst blow—the only blow she had received in these five years. Her swollen lips quivered.

"I say Sister Agnes has gone. You will never see her again. And it's a good riddance! I never could bear that woman!"

"Oh, madame! madame!"

Fouchette sank to her knees appealingly.

"Get up!"

"Oh, madame!"

"Get up! Not another word!"

"But, madame!"

"There, my child," put in the priest. "You hear?"

"But Sister Agnes was my only friend here. Where has she gone? Tell me why she has gone. Oh, mon Dieu! Gone! and left me here without a word! Oh! oh! madame!"

"She's gone because I sent her,—because it is her sworn duty to obey,—to go where she is sent. Where and why is none of her business, much less yours. Now let us hear no more from you on that point, or you will forfeit the leniency I was about to extend to you. Go!"

"But, madame," supplicated Fouchette, "hear me! Sister Agnes——"

The Supérieure was now furious. She rang a little bell, waving Father Sébastien aside. Two sisters appeared,—her personal attendants, well known to those who had suffered punishment.

"Give this girl the douche!"

"Madame!" screamed Fouchette.

"Give her the douche—for fighting in the dormitory. In the refectory. Assemble everybody! And if she resists let her have the paddle. If that doesn't bring her to her senses, give her five days on bread and water. I'll take that rebellious spirit out of her or——"

The two women hustled the trembling Fouchette away from the Presence.

Fouchette knew the disgrace of the douche. She had seen grown young women stripped stark naked before five hundred girls and have a bucket of ice-cold water thrown over them. One of them had been ill and was unable to do her work. She had died from the effects.

Fouchette understood the terrible significance of the paddle. A girl was stripped and strung up by the wrists to a door and was beaten with a heavy leather strap soaked in brine until the blood ran down her thighs.

Fouchette comprehended the character of the five days on bread and water, wherein the victim was forced to remain in her own filth for five days with nothing to eat but a half-loaf of stale bread and a small pitcher of water per twenty-four hours.

Yet, dreadful as was this immediate prospect, and as cruel as was the injustice meted out to her, Fou-

chette thought only of Sister Agnes. She would have gone to punishment like a Stoic of old could somebody have assured her that what she had just heard was false and that Sister Agnes was yet in the institution. Everything else and all together seemed dwarfed by the side of this one great overwhelming calamity.

"How could you have so angered Madame?" said one of her conductors,—both of whom were aware that she was to be unjustly punished.

"Be good, now, Fouchette," whispered the other; "besides, it is nothing,—a little water,—bah!"

They were leading her along a dark corridor, the same through which she had been taken five years before. It rushed over her now,—dear Sister Agnes!

"I only wanted to know about Sister Agnes," protested Fouchette.

Her conductors stopped short.

"S-sh! Mademoiselle did not know that——"

"That what?"

"Better tell her, sister," encouraged the other woman.

"That Sister Agnes was—was suspected of being a creature of the Secret Police?"

"N-no, madame," faltered the girl,—"I don't understand. And if——"

"And we are for the restoration——"

"The restoration——"

"Of the throne of France."

"Is it Inspector Loup?" asked Fouchette, suddenly recalling that personage.

" Inspector Loup,—it is he who is responsible for the withdrawal of Sister Agnes, mademoiselle."

" Paris,—I will go to Paris!" said Fouchette, brightening up all at once.

To the two who heard her it was as if Fouchette had said, " I will go to the moon."

She slipped from between them and darted down the corridor. Before they had recovered from their astonishment she was out of the building and out of sight.

Nothing could have been more absurd.

But one girl had succeeded in scaling the high walls that surrounded the establishment of Le Bon Pasteur, and she had been pursued by savage dogs kept for such exigencies and brought back in mere shreds of clothing, with her flesh terribly lacerated. Even once outside, if the feat were possible and the dogs avoided, how was a bareheaded girl without a sou to get to Paris, three hundred kilometres? And, that surmounted, what would become of her in Paris?

It was absurd. It was impossible.

Meanwhile, Fouchette evaded the now lighted buildings in the rear and was skirting the high walls towards the north with the fleetness of a young deer.

The grounds of Le Bon Pasteur embraced about ten acres, a well-wooded section of an ancient park, the buildings, old and new, being on the side next to the town. By day one might easily see from wall to wall, the lowest branches of the trees being well clear of the ground, the latter being trampled grassless, hard, and smooth by thousands of youthful feet.

It was now growing too dark to see more than a

few yards. This did not prevent Fouchette from making good speed. She knew every inch of the park. And as she ran her thoughts kept on well ahead.

She had started with the definite idea of leaving the place, but without the slightest idea of how that was to be accomplished. Like a frightened rabbit running an enclosure, she sought in vain for some unheard-of opening,—some breach in the wall, some projections by which she might scale the frowning barrier.

Now and then she paused to listen intently. There were no pursuers, apparently. Her heart sank rather than rose at the thought; for it implied that the chances of her escape were not considered worth an energetic effort,—that she must inevitably return of her own accord.

Fouchette was mistaken. It was only that the pursuers were not so sure of their route and were not so fleet of foot. They had called in re-enforcements and were approaching in extended order beneath the trees, with the moral certainty of rounding her up.

As soon as Fouchette realized this she felt that she was lost. There was no place to hide from such a search,—then they could let loose the dogs!

With a fresh energy born of desperation she sprang at the chestnut-tree in front of her and began to shin up the rough trunk, boy fashion. Like most generalizations, the statement that a woman cannot climb a tree is not an axiomatic truth. It depends wholly upon the woman and the occasion. Fouchette had often amused her playmates by going up trees, and was considered a valuable addition to any party of chestnut

hunters. So in this instance the woman and the occasion met. She was securely perched in the foliage when the scouting party went by. One sister walked directly beneath the tree.

"We ought to have brought the dogs," she muttered.

Fouchette was breathless.

Immediate danger past, she began to think of what she should do next. She could not remain up there forever; and if she came down she would be just where she was before,—would probably be run down by the dogs.

Presently she saw a light glimmering through the trees. Cautiously pushing the leaves aside, she saw it more distinctly. It was bobbing up and down. It was a lantern. It was coming towards her. Being a lantern, it must be carried by somebody, and that this somebody was in search of her she had no doubt. All the world was out after her.

The lantern came closer. And then she saw the barbed iron wall immediately below her, between her and the lantern. It was outside, then; and the tree she was in seemed to overhang the wall.

A desperate hope arose within her,—scarcely a hope yet,—rather a vague fancy. They could not have spread the alarm outside so quickly,—the lantern and its bearer could have no reference to her escape.

It was now almost immediately beneath her, and she saw that it was borne by a stalwart young man. It was a chance,—a mere chance,—but she at once resolved to risk it.

"S-sh!"

The bearer of the lantern stopped, raised it high, and peered about in every direction.

"S-sh!" repeated Fouchette.

"S-sh yourself!" said the young man, evidently suspecting some trick.

"Not so loud if you please, monsieur."

"Not so—but where the devil are you, anyhow?" He had looked in every direction except the right one.

"Here," whispered Fouchette. "Up in the tree."

"Tonnerre! And what are you doing up there in the tree, mademoiselle?" he inquired with astonishment, elevating his lantern so as to get a glimpse of the owner of the voice.

"Nothing," said Fouchette.

"Well, if this don't—say, mademoiselle."

"Please don't talk so loud, monsieur. They will hear you, and I will be lost."

"Indeed! So you're running away, eh?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"What for?"

"Because they are going to give me the douche, the paddle, and prison."

"The wretches!" whispered the young man through his half-set teeth.

"Then you'll help me, monsieur?" asked Fouchette, in a tone of entreaty.

"That I will," said he, promptly, "if I can. If you could swing yourself over the wall, now; but, dame! no girl can do that," he added half to himself.

"I'll try it," said Fouchette.

"Don't do it, mademoiselle; you'll break your neck."

For answer to this, Fouchette, who had been work-

ing her dangerous way out on the uncertain branches, holding tenaciously to those above, so as to wisely distribute her weight, only said,—

"Look out, now!"

There was no time to parley,—it was her only hope,—and if she fell inside the wall——

A splash among the leaves and a violent reversal of branches relieved of her weight and—and a ripping sound.

"Oh, mon Dieu!" she gasped.

She had swung clear, but her skirts had caught the iron spikes as she came down and now held her firmly, head downward,—a very embarrassing predicament.

"Put out the light, monsieur, please!"

He gallantly closed the slide and sprang to her assistance.

"Don't be afraid, mademoiselle. Let go,—I'll catch you. Let go!"

"Oh, but I——"

"Let go!"

"Sacré bleu! I can't, monsieur! I'm stuck like a fish on a gaff! My skirts——"

This startling intelligence, while it relieved his immediate anxiety, involved the young man in a painful quandary. He dared not call for help; he was likely to be arrested in any case; he could not go away and leave the girl dangling there. She was at least three feet beyond his extreme reach.

"Let's see," he said, hastily grabbing his lantern to make an examination.

"Oh, put out that light!" exclaimed the girl.

"But, mademoiselle, I can't see——"

"Mon Dieu! monsieur, I don't wish you to see! No! I should—put down the lantern!"

Having complied with this request, he stood under her in despair.

"Can't you tear the—the—what-you-may-call-it loose?"

"No; it's my skirt,—my dress,—I'm slipping out of it. Look out, monsieur, for—I'm—coming—oh!"

And come she did, head first, minus the dress skirt, plump into the startled young man's arms.

CHAPTER V

"Me voilà!" said Fouchette, gaining her feet and lightly shaking her ruffled remains together, as if she were a young pullet that had calmly fluttered down from the roost.

"Well, you're a bird!" he ejaculated, the more embarrassed of the two.

"Mon Dieu! monsieur, but for you I'd soon have been a dead bird! I thank you ever so much."

She reached up at him and succeeded in pecking a little kiss on his chin. It was her first attempt at the masculine mouth and she could scarcely be censured if she missed it.

"It certainly was a lucky chance that I came this way at the moment," he said.

"It was, indeed," she assented.

He was surveying her now by the light of his lantern; and he smiled at her slight figure in the short petticoat. Her blind confidence in him and her general assurance amused him.

"Where were you thinking of going, mademoiselle?"

"To Paris."

"Paris!"

The young man almost dropped his lantern. Paris seemed out of reach to him.

"And why not, monsieur?"

"Er—well, mademoiselle, climbing a tree and throwing one's self head over heels over a wall—er—and——"

"And leaving ones skirt hanging on the spikes——"

"Yes,—is not the customary way for young ladies to start for Paris. But I suppose you know what you are about."

"If I only had my skirt."

Fouchette glanced up at the offending member of her attire which she had cast from her.

"Never mind that,—I'll return and get it. Come with me, mademoiselle. I live near by, and my mother and sisters will protect you for the time being. Come! Where's your hat?"

"I didn't have time——"

"You didn't stop to pack your bundle, eh?"

"Not exactly, monsieur."

They walked along silently for a few yards, following the wall.

"You have relatives in Paris, mademoiselle?" he finally asked.

"No, monsieur."

"Friends, then?"

"Well, yes."

"It is good. Paris is no place for a young girl alone. Besides, it is just now a scene of riot and bloodshed. It is in a state bordering on revolution. All France is roused. Royalists and Bonapartists have combined against the life of the republic. Paris is swarming with troops. There will be barricades and fighting in the streets, mademoiselle."

Fouchette recalled the fragments of conversations overheard,—conversations between the Supérieure and Father Sébastien and certain visitors. Beyond this casual information she knew absolutely nothing of

what was going on in the outer world. He misconstrued her silence.

"Whom do you know in Paris, mademoiselle?—somebody powerful enough to protect you?"

"Oh, yes, monsieur," she promptly answered. "I know one man,—one who sent me here,—who is powerful——"

"May I ask——"

"The Chief of the Secret Police," she said, lowering her tone to a confidential scale,—"Inspector Loup."

"Oh, pardon, mademoiselle!" quickly responded the young man. "Pardon! I meant it for your welfare, not to inquire into your business. Oh, no; do not think me capable of that!"

He appeared to be somewhat frightened at what he had done, but became reassured when she passed it with easy good nature.

"It is important, then, mademoiselle, that you reach Paris at once?"

"It is very important, monsieur."

"The royalist scoundrels are very active," he said. "They must be headed off—exposed!"

He spoke enthusiastically, seizing Fouchette's hand warmly. That demoiselle, who was floundering around in a position she did not understand, walked along resolved to keep her peace. He assured her that she might fully rely upon him and his in this emergency. Let her put him to the test.

The enigmatical situation was more confounding to Fouchette when she was being overwhelmed with the subservient attentions of the young man's family; but the less she comprehended the more she held her

tongue. They were of the class moderately well-to-do and steeped in politics up to the neck.

Fouchette knew next to nothing about politics. Only that France was a republic and that many were dissatisfied with that form of government; that some wanted the empire, and others the restoration of the kings, and still others anything but existing things. Having never been called upon to form an opinion, Fouchette had no opinion on the subject. She did not care a snap what kind of a government ruled,—it could make no difference to her.

Coming in contact with all of this enthusiasm, she now knew that Le Bon Pasteur was royalist for some reason; and she shrewdly guessed, without the assistance of this family conviction, that all Jesuits, whatever they might otherwise be, were also royalists. And, as Inspector Loup was a part of the existing government, he must be a republican,—which was not so shrewd as it was logical; therefore that if Sister Agnes was suspected of being friendly to Inspector Loup, the good sister was a republican and naturally the political enemy of the managers of Le Bon Pasteur. Whatever Sister Agnes was it must be right.

But in holding her tongue Fouchette was most clever of all,—whereas, usually, the less people know about government the more persistently they talk politics.

The young man went back to the wall with a fish-pole and rescued the recalcitrant skirt, much to her delight. His mother mended the rents in it and his sisters fitted her out with a smart hat.

It was soon developed that Fouchette had no money. This brought about a family consultation.

"I must go to Paris," said Fouchette, determinedly, "if I have to walk!"

"Nonsense!" said the young man.

"Nonsense!" chimed in mother and sisters.

"I'll fix you all right," finally declared the young man, "on a single condition,—that you carry a letter from me to Inspector Loup and deliver it into his own hands, mademoiselle. Is it a bargain?"

"Oh, yes, monsieur,—very sure!" cried the girl, almost overcome by this last good fortune. "You are very good,—it would be a pleasure, monsieur, I assure you."

"And if you were to tell him the part I have taken to-night in your case it would be of great service,—if you would be so good, mademoiselle. Not that it is anything, but——"

"You may be assured of that, too," said Fouchette, who, however, did not understand what possible interest lay in this direction.

They were all so effusive and apparently grateful that she was made to believe herself a very important personage.

As the letter was brought out immediately, she saw that it was already prepared, and wondered why it was not sent by post.

Another family consultation, and it was decided that Fouchette might lose the letter by some accident; so, on the suggestion of the mother, it was carefully sewn in the bosom of their emissary's dress.

It was also suggested that, since an effort for Fouchette's recapture might include the careful scrutiny of the trains for Paris the next day, she should be

accompanied at once to a suburban town where she could take the midnight express.

All of these details were not settled without considerable discussion, in which Fouchette came to the private conclusion that they were even more anxious for her to get to Paris than she was herself, if such a thing were possible.

* * * * * * *

Fouchette arrived in Paris and alighted at the Gare de l'Est at a very early hour in the morning. Her idea had been to go direct to the Préfecture and demand the whereabouts of Sister Agnes. Incidentally she would deliver the mysterious letter intrusted to her.

But during her journey Fouchette had enjoyed ample time for reflection. She was not absolutely certain of her reception at the hands of Inspector Loup; could not satisfy her own mind that he would receive her at all. Besides, would he really know anything about Sister Agnes?

Fouchette's self-confidence had been oozing away in the same ratio as she was nearing her journey's end. When she had finally arrived she was almost frightened at the notion of meeting Inspector Loup. He had threatened her with prison. He might regard her now as an escaped convict. On the whole, Fouchette was really sorry she had run away. Back again in Paris, where she had suffered so much, she realized again that there were worse places for a girl than Le Bon Pasteur. Anyhow, it was early,—there was plenty of time,—she would consider.

She took the tramway of the Boulevards Straus-

bourg and Sébastopol, climbing to the imperial, where a seat was to be had for three sous.

What crowds of people!

She was surprised to see the great human flood pouring down the boulevards and side streets at such an early hour in the morning. But her volatile nature rose to the touch of excitement. She at once forgot everything else but the street. Fouchette was a true Parisienne.

"Paris!" she murmured; "dear Paris!"

As if Paris had blessed her childhood with pleasure, instead of having starved and beaten her and degraded her to the level of beasts!

"Where on earth are all of these people going?" she asked herself.

There were now and then cries of "Vive l'armée!" "Vive la république!" and "Vive la France!" while the excitement seemed to grow as they reached the Porte St. Denis.

"What is it, monsieur?" she finally asked the man at her side.

"It is the 25th of October," said he.

"But, monsieur, what is the matter?"

He looked over his shoulder at the young girl rather resentfully, though his doubts as to her sincerity vanished in a smile.

"It is the rentrée of the Chambers," he answered.

"Oh," she said, "is that it?"

But she knew no more now than she had known before. Presently her curiosity again got the better of her timidity.

"Where are they going, monsieur?"

"They don't know, mademoiselle. Palais Bourbon, Place de la Concorde,—anywhere it happens to be lively enough to suit. But where have you been, mademoiselle, to not know,—in the country?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"And where are you going?"

"Place de la Concorde."

"Don't do it, little one,—don't you do it! It is not a place for a mite like you on such a day. Take my advice,—go anywhere else."

"I'm going to the Place de la Concorde, monsieur," she responded, quite stiffly.

When she reached the great plaza, however, she found it practically deserted. The usual throngs of carriages were passing to and fro. Immense black crowds blocked the Rue Royale at the Madeleine and in the opposite direction in the vicinity of the Palais Bourbon across the river. These crowds appeared to be held at bay by the cordons of police agents, who kept the Place de la Concorde clear and pedestrians moving lively in the intersecting streets.

Fouchette hopped nimbly off the steps of the omnibus she had taken at le Châtelet, to the amusement of a gang of hilarious students from the Latin Quarter, who recognized in her the "tenderfoot."

The Parisienne always leaves the omnibus steps with her back to the horses. This keeps American visitors standing around looking for a mishap which never happens; for the Parisienne is an expert equilibrist and can perform this feat while the vehicle is at full speed, not only with safety but with an airy grace that is often charming.

But Fouchette did not mind the laughter; she had found a good place from which to view whatever was to be seen. She did not have to wait long.

"À bas le sabre!" shouted a man.

"À bas les traitres!" yelled the students in unison.

One of the latter leaped at the man and felled him with a blow.

The frantic crowd of young men attempted to jump upon this victim of public opinion, but as others rushed at the same time to his rescue, all came together in a tumultuous, struggling heap.

The angry combatants surged this way and that,—the score soon became an hundred, the hundred became a thousand. It was a mystery whence these turbulent elements sprang, so quickly did the mob gather strength.

The original offender got away in the confusion. But the struggle went on, accompanied by shouts, curses, and groans. One platoon of police agents charged down upon the fighters, then another platoon.

Friends struck friends in sheer excess of fury. The momentarily swelling roar of the combat reverberated in the Rue Royale and echoed and re-echoed from the garden of the Tuileries.

The police agents struggled in vain. They were unable to penetrate beyond the outer rows of the mob. And these turned and savagely assaulted the agents.

Then the massive grilles of the Tuileries swung upon their hinges and a squadron of cuirassiers slowly trotted into the Place de la Concorde. They swept gracefully into line. A harsh, rasping sound of steel, a rattle of breastplates as the sabres twinkled in the

sunshine, and the column moved down upon the snarling horde of human tigers.

Brave when it was a single unarmed man, the mob broke and ran like frightened sheep at the sight of the advancing cavalry.

In the mean time myriads of omnibuses, vans, carriages, and vehicles of all descriptions, having been blocked by a similar mob in the narrow Rue Royale and at the Pont de la Concorde in the other direction, now became tangled in an apparently inextricable mass in the middle square.

The individual members of the crowd broke for this cover, while the agents dashed among them to make arrests. Men scrambled under omnibuses and wagons, leaped through carriages, dodged between wheels, climbed over horses, crept on their hands and knees beneath vans.

Fouchette ran like a rabbit, but between the rush of police and scattering of the mob she was sorely hustled. She finally sprang into an open voiture in the jam, and wisely remained there in spite of the driver's furious gesticulations.

"This way!" cried a stalwart young student to his fleeing companions.

The agents were hot upon them.

Fouchette saw that they were covered with dirt, and one was hatless. And this one glared at her as he dodged beneath the horse.

The next vehicle was pulled up short, as if to close the narrow passage, whereat the hatless man shook his fist at the driver and cursed him.

"Vive la liberté!" retorted the driver.

"So! We'll give you liberty, you cur!" and the hatless man called to his nearest companion, "Over with him!"

The two seized the light vehicle and overturned it as if it were an empty basket. The driver pitched forward, sprawling, to the asphalt. Seeing which the wary driver of the voiture in which Fouchette was seated turned and called to her behind his hand,—

"Keep your seat, mademoiselle! It's all right!"

He was terrified lest his carriage should follow the fate of his neighbor's. But the young men merely compelled him to whip up and keep the lines closed, and with this moving barricade they trotted along secure from present assault. Fouchette could have touched the nearest student. She was so frightened that the coachman's admonition was quite unnecessary. She could not have stirred.

"Jean!" said the hatless man to the other, who was so close, "you saw Lerouge there?"

"See him! I was near enough to punch him!"

"Did you——"

"Ah!" There was a quaver in his voice.

"I understand, my friend."

"But I can't understand Lerouge," said the young man called Jean. "Don't be afraid, mademoiselle," he added, speaking to Fouchette reassuringly. "Our friends the agents——"

"Oh, there they come, monsieur!" she cried.

"Pardieu!" exclaimed the hatless. "We're caught!"

A big van loaded with straw blocked the way. Behind it skulked a whole platoon of blue uniforms. The fugitives hesitated for a second or two.

"Over with it!" shouted the hatless young man, at the same moment appropriating a deserted headpiece.

"Down with the agents!"

A dozen stalwart young men seized the big wheels. The top-heavy load wavered an instant, then went over with a simultaneous swish and a yell.

The latter came from the police agents, now half buried in the straw.

A second squadron of cavalry, Garde de Paris, drawn up near by, witnessed this incident and smiled. These little pleasantries amuse all good Parisians.

Safety now lay in separation. Jean kept on towards the Rue Royale; his friends broke off, scattering towards the Rue de Rivoli.

"Que diable!" he muttered.

He stopped and looked hastily about him.

"Well, devil take her anyhow,—she's gone. And I'm here."

He saw himself, with many others out of the line of blocked vehicles, hemmed in by agents, Gardes de Paris, and cuirassiers to the right and left, now driven into the Rue Royale as stray animals into a pound.

Double lines of police agents supported by infantry and cavalry held both ends of this short street; here, where it opened into the Place de la Concorde and there where it led at the Madeleine into the grand boulevards.

The roar of the mob came down upon him from the Madeleine, where the rioters had forced the defensive line from time to time only to be driven back by the

fists and feet of the police agents and with the flat of the cavalry sabre.

The authorities knew their ground. The Rue Royale was the key to the military position.

But in the attempt to clear the Place de la Concorde the nearest fugitives were thrust into the Rue Royale and driven by horse and foot towards the Madeleine, where they were mercilessly kicked outside the lines to shift for themselves, an unwilling part of a frenzied mob.

"I'm a rat in a trap here," growled the young man, having been literally thrown through the lower cordon by two stalwart agents.

The shopkeepers had put up their heavy shutters. The grilles were closed. People looked down from window and balcony upon a street sealed as tight as wax.

Having witnessed the infantry reserves ambushed behind the Ministry of Marine filling their magazines, and being confronted by a fresh émeute above, Jean Marot began to feel queer for the first time of a day of brawls.

He recalled the historical fact that here in this narrow street a thousand people were slain in a panic on the occasion of the celebration of the marriage of Marie Antoinette.

A horseman with drawn sabre rode at him and ordered him to move on more quickly.

"But where to, Monsieur le Caporal?"

"Anywhere, mon enfant! Out of this, now! Circulate!"

"But——"

"There is no 'but!' What business have you here? You are not a Deputy!" The man urged him with his sabre.

"Hold, Monsieur le Caporal! Has, then, a citizen of Paris no longer any right to go home without insult from the uniform?"

"Where do you live, monsieur?"

"Just around the corner in the Faubourg St. Honoré," replied the young man.

"Ah!" growled the cavalryman, doubtfully, "and there is another route."

All of this time the soldier's horse, trained by much service of this sort during the preceding year, was pushing Jean along of his own accord,—now with his breast, now with his impatient nose,—to the considerable sacrifice of that young man's dignity. The latter edged up to the wall, but the horse followed him, shoving him along gently but firmly under a loose rein.

Jean flattened himself against a doorway to escape the pressure. But the horse paused also and leaned against him.

"Oh, say, then!"

"Hello! Here they come again!" exclaimed the corporal, reining in his horse, with his eyes bent towards the Madeleine.

At this juncture the door was suddenly opened and Jean, who was fast having the breath squeezed out of him, fell inside.

The door was as suddenly closed again and barred.

The cavalryman, who had not seen this movement, glanced around on either side, behind, then beneath

his horse, finally up in the sky, and shrugged his shoulders and rode on along the walk.

"Oho, Monsieur Jean!" roared a friendly voice as the young man caught his breath; "trying to break into my house, eh? By my saint, young man, you were in a mighty tight place! Oh, this dreadful day! No business at all, and——"

"Business!" gasped Jean,—"business, man! Never had a more busy day in my life!"

"You? Yes! it is such wild young blades as you and that serious-looking Lerouge who raise all the row in Paris.—I say, monsieur," broke off the garrulous old restaurateur, and, running to the window behind the bar, "they're putting the sand!"

Men with barrows from the Ministry of Marine were hastily strewing the smooth asphalt with sand. It meant cavalry operations.

"But, Monsieur Jean, where's your double? Where's the other Marot to-day?"

Jean's face clouded. He did not reply.

"I never saw two men look so much alike," continued the restaurateur.

"So the medics all say, and that I do all the deviltry and Henri gets sent to dépôt for it." He had called for something to eat, and looked up from the distant table in continuation,—

"Lerouge has turned out to be the most rabid Dreyfusarde. We met in the fun to-day——"

"Fun!"

"There certainly was fun for a while. George Villeroy, when I last saw him, was being chased to the

Rue de Rivoli. Hope he gets back this evening at Le Petit Rouge."

"Le Petit Rouge! Faugh! Nest of red republicans, royalists——"

"No royalists——"

"Anarchists——"

"Yes, I'll admit that——"

"And bloody bones——"

"Bloody noses to-day, monsieur."

"And this Lerouge and you?"

"Yes, this is George's night to carve," said Jean, changing the subject back to surgery.

"Carve?"

"Yes,—certes! Cut into something fresh, if it turns up."

"Turns up?"

"Why, Monsieur Bibbôlet, you're as clever as a parrot! Yes, turns up. Subject, stiff, cadaver,—see? —Le café, garçon!"

"Ah! you medical——"

"You see, George has a new arterial theory to demonstrate. I tell you, he can pick up an artery as easily as your cook can pick a chicken. If you'd care to let him try——"

"How! Pick up my arteries? Not if I——"

"What's that?"

They again ran to the window.

"It's the cuirassiers, Monsieur Jean! Ah! if it came to blows they'd pot 'em like rabbits here! You're out of it just in time."

So closely was the squadron of cuirassiers wedged in the street that Jean could have put his hand upon

the jack-boots of the nearest soldier. There had been a fresh break in the Madeleine guard, and this was the reserve. They slowly pricked their resistless way, and one by one the exhausted agents slipped between them to the rear. Some of the latter dragged prisoners, some supported bruised and bleeding victims. Some persons had been trampled or beaten into insensibility, and these were being carried towards the Place de la Concorde. Among them were women. There are always women in the Paris mob.

And this particular mob was a mere political "manifestation." That was all. It was the 25th of October, 1898, and the day on which the French Parliament met. So the Parisian patriots lined the route to the Palais Bourbon and "manifested" their devotion to liberty French fashion, by clubbing everybody who disagreed with them.

"Well!" said Jean, "they have pushed beyond St. Honoré. I can get home now."

"Not yet, monsieur. Do not go yet. It is still dangerous. A bottle of old Barsac with me."

* * * * * * *

Night had fallen. Jean Marot was cautiously let out of a side door.

The Ministry had also fallen.

Hoarse-lunged venders of the evening papers announced the fact in continuous cries. Travel had been resumed in the Rue Royale. Here and there the shops began to take in their shutters and resume business. Timid shopkeepers came out on the walk and discussed the situation with each other.

The ministerial journals sold by wholesale. The

angry manifestants burned them in the streets. Which rendered the camelots more insistent and obnoxious with fresh bundles to be sold and destroyed in the same way.

Jean Marot, refreshed by rest and food, lingered a moment at Rue St. Honoré, uncertain whether to return to his rooms or join a mob of patriots howling the Marseillaise in front of the Café de Londres.

"Enough," he finally concluded, and turned up towards the Rue Boissy d'Anglais.

There were evidences of a fierce struggle in the narrow but aristocratic faubourg. Usually a blaze of light at this hour, it was closed from street to street and practically deserted. Scared milliners and dressmakers and fashionable jewellers peered out from upper windows, still afraid to open up. Fragments of broken canes, battered hats, and torn vestments told an eloquent story of political differences.

"We certainly missed the fun here," thought Jean. "Hello! What's this?"

He had tripped on a woman's skirt in the shadow of the wall.

"Peste! Why can't our fair dames and demoiselles let *us* fight it out? There really isn't enough to go round!"

He paused, then returned impulsively and looked at the dark bundle,—stirred it with his foot. It was certainly the figure of a woman.

"Last round," he muttered; "next, the Seine!"

His budding professional instincts prompted him to search for the pulse.

It was still.

And when he took his hand away it was covered with blood.

"Wait!"

He placed his hand over the heart, then uncovered a young but bruised and swollen face.

"The cavalry," he murmured. "She's dead; she—well, perhaps it was better."

He glanced up and down the street, as if considering whether to go his way or to call the police. There was nobody in sight near enough to attract by cries. The police were busy elsewhere. Then his face all at once lighted up.

"A good idea!" he ejaculated,—"a very good idea!"

He saw two cabs approaching.

Calling the first, he began to carry the good idea into immediate execution.

"What is it, monsieur?" inquired the cabman, seeing the body.

"An accident. Quick, cocher!"

With his usual decision Jean thrust the body into the cab and followed it.

"Allez!" he commanded.

"But, monsieur,—the—the—where to?"

"Pont de Solferino, to Boulevard St. Germain. An extra franc, my lad!"

Having vaguely started the cabby, Jean had time to think. He knew the prejudices most people entertain concerning the dead. Especially the prejudices of Paris police agents and cabmen. To give the Rue de Médecine would set the man to speculating. To mention Le Petit Rouge would be to have him hail the first man in uniform.

As to Jean Marot, medical student, du Quartier Latin, in his fourth year, a lifeless body was no more than a bag of sand. It was merely a " subject."

" The chief benefit conferred upon society and humanity by a large proportion of our population," he would have cynically observed to any caviller, " is by dying and becoming useful ' subjects.' "

He considered himself fortunate, however, in having a close cab, out of deference to those who might differ with him. They crossed the Pont de Solferino, where a momentary halt gave a couple of alert agents a chance to scrutinize him a little more sharply than was comfortable, and turned down Boulevard St. Germain.

At the École de Médecine Jean stopped the cab, as if struck with a new idea.

" Cocher!"

" Yes, monsieur?"

" Drive to 12 Rue Antoine Dubois."

" How then!"

" I said—drive—to—No. 12—Rue Antoine Dubois! You know where that is?"

" Oh, yes, monsieur,—only—er—it is right over there opposite the——"

The man was so excited he found difficulty in expressing himself.

" École Pratique,—that's right," said Jean.

Hardened sinner that he was, the old Paris coachman crossed himself and, as he entered the uncanny neighborhood, felt around for the sacred amulet that every good Frenchman wears next to the skin.

"I must get some instruments there before taking this lady home," Jean added.

The Rue Antoine Dubois is a short street connecting the Rue et Place de l'École de Médecine with the Rue de Monsieur le Prince. One side of it is formed by the gloomy wall of the École Pratique, where more "subjects" are disposed of annually than in any other dozen similar institutions in the world; the other by various medical shops and libraries, over which are "clubs," "laboratories," "cliniques," and student lodgings. At the Rue de Monsieur le Prince the street ends in a great flight of steps. It therefore forms an impasse, or a pocket for carriages, and is little used. It was now deserted.

The coachman drew up before a dark court entrance, a sickly light shining upon him through the surgical appliances, articulated skeletons, skulls, and other professional exhibits of the nearest window.

"Let us see; I'll take her up-stairs and make a more careful examination."

"You—you're a doctor, monsieur?"

"Yes,—there!" He gave the man a five-franc piece. "No,—never mind the change."

"Merci, monsieur!"

"Better wait—till I see how she is, you know."

Jean bore his burden very carefully till out of sight; then threw it over his shoulder and felt his way up the half-lighted stairs. He knew quite well that the man would not wait; believed that the overpayment would induce him to get away as quickly and as far as possible.

"It's a stiff, sure!" growled the nervous cabman, and he drove out of the place at a furious rate.

Jean threw his "subject" on the floor and hunted around for a light.

"Le Petit Rouge"—its frequenters were medical students and political extremists—was replete with books, bones, and anatomical drawings, black-and-white and in colors. Two complete skeletons mounted guard,—one in the farther corner, one behind the door. There were tables and instrument-cases, and surgical saws and things in racks. There were easy-chairs, pipes, etc. A skull, with the top neatly sawed off to serve as cover, formed a tobacco receptacle.

But the chef-d'œuvre was from Jean's ingenious hand. It was the bow-backed skeleton behind the door, which had been cleverly arranged as and was called "Madame la Concierge." The skeleton had been arrayed in a short conventional ballet skirt and scanty lace cap, and held a candle in one hand and a bottle marked "Absinthe" in the other. The skirt was to indicate her earlier career, the cap and candle gave an inkling of her later life, while the bottle told the probable cause of her decease. This skeleton was so controlled by wires and cords that it could be made to move out in front of the open door and raise the candle above the head, as if to see who asked for admission. When the room was in semi-darkness Madame la Concierge of Le Petit Rouge was charmingly effective, and had been known to throw some people into spasms.

Placing his lamp in a favorable position, Jean Marot pulled off his coat, removed his cuffs, rolled up his sleeves, and proceeded to extend his subject upon what

young Armand Massard facetiously called "the dressing-table."

"Good God!" he exclaimed, falling back a step. "Why, it's the demoiselle of the Place de la Concorde!"

CHAPTER VI

And so it was.

Fouchette had been thrown from the voiture in the conflict, and had been run over by the mob and trampled into the mud of the gutter. So covered with the filth of the street was she, so torn and bruised and bedraggled, that she would have been unrecognizable even to one who had seen her more often than had her present examiner.

There was something in the girl's face, however, that had left an impression on the mind of Jean Marot not easily effaced. It was too indistinct and unemotional, this impression, to inspire analysis, but it was there, so that, under the lamp, Jean had at once recognized the young woman of the carriage.

"It's murder, that's what it is," he soliloquized,— "victim of 'Vive l'armée.'"

A most careful examination showed there were no bones broken, though the young body was literally black and blue.

The face was that of a prize-fighter's after a stubborn battle.

Inspection of the clothing developed no marks of recognition. Her pocket lining showed that she had been robbed of anything she may have possessed. The coarse character and general appearance of the clothing indicated her lowly condition of charity scholar.

Although rigor mortis had not yet set in, the medical student, armed with a basin and sponge, proceeded to prepare the body for the scalpel.

"This ought to suit George Villeroy," he mused.

"And George has always said I was no good except on a lark. He has always pined for a fresh subject——"

He was attracted by the quality and peculiar color of the hair, and washing the stains from the head, examined the latter attentively.

"I never saw but one woman with hair like that, and she—wonder what the devil is in Lerouge, anyhow!—I suppose—hold on here! Let us see."

He had found a terrible gash in the scalp. Hastily obtaining his instruments, he skilfully lifted a bit of crushed skull.

As he did so he fancied there was a slight tremor in the slender body. He nervously tested the heart, the nostrils, the pulse, then breathed once more.

"Dame! It is imagination. That break would have killed an ox!"

Yet he took another careful look at the wound, cutting away some of the fair hair in order to get at the fracture. Then he made another experiment.

"Pardieu! she's alive," he whispered, hoarsely. "What's to be done? They're right. Jean! Jean! you'll never be a doctor! Never be anything but a d——d fool!"

But Jean Marot, if not a doctor, was a young man of action and resources. Even as he spoke he grabbed a sheet and a blanket from a cot in the corner, snatched a hat belonging to Massard's grisette from the wall, bundled the girl's clothes around the body the best he could, and ran to the window.

As he had anticipated would be the case, the cabman had disappeared.

He was fully aware of the risk he now ran; but

above his sense of personal danger rose his sympathy and anxiety for the young girl.

He realized that his first step must be to get her out of this place; next to get her under the care of a regular practitioner. French law is severe in such a contingency. Without hesitation he again shouldered his burden,—this time with infinite gentleness.

At first he had thought of depositing it in the court below until he had secured a cab in the Rue et Place de l'École de Médecine; but he saw an open voiture passing along the elevated horizon of the Rue de Monsieur le Prince and gave a shrill whistle.

The cab stopped.

Jean bounded up the steps as one endowed with superhuman strength. Placing his charge within, he mounted by his side.

"Faubourg St. Honoré!" he commanded. "And good speed and safe arrival is worth ten francs to you, my man!"

* * * * * * *

If Jean had followed his first idea and turned to the left instead of to the right he would have met some of his late revolutionary comrades returning, in boisterous spirits, to Le Petit Rouge.

"Parbleu!" exclaimed Villeroy, throwing himself into a chair, "but I believe every police agent in Paris has trodden on my corns this day!"

"For my part," said young Massard, a thin, pale, indolent young man scarcely turned twenty-one, "I don't see much fun in being hustled, shoved, kicked, pounded——"

"But, Armand," interrupted the third man, "think of the fun you have afforded the other fellow!"

This speaker was known as the double of Jean Marot, only some people could not see the slightest resemblance when the two were together,—Lerouge being taller, darker, more athletic in appearance, and more serious of temper.

"I say, Lerouge, I don't think your crowd of Dreyfusardes got much pleasure out of us to-day," put in Villeroy, dryly.

"We got some of it out of the police, it is true," said Lerouge. Henri Lerouge was half anarchist, socialist, and an extremist generally, of whom French politics presents a formidable contingent.

Armand Massard thoughtfully helped himself to a pipe of tobacco from the grim tabatière on the table. Politics was barred at Le Petit Rouge, and Lerouge was known to be rather irritable. On the subject of the police these young fellows were unanimous. The agents were considered fair game in the Quartier Latin.

"I've had enough of them for this once, George," yawned Massard.

"And they've had enough of us probably," suggested Villeroy.

"It is lively,—too much,—this continued dodging the police——"

"Together with one's creditors——"

A loud double rap startled them.

"Mordieu!" exclaimed that young man, leaping to his feet, "that's one now! Don't open!"

Again the peremptory raps, louder than before. There was also a clank of steel.

"Police agents or I'm a German!" said Villeroy.

Henri Lerouge, a contemptuous smile on his handsome face, arose to admit the callers.

"Wait!" whispered Massard,—"one moment! Madame la Concierge shall receive them."

This idea tickled the young men exceedingly. They had little to fear from the police, unless it was the chance identification on the Place de la Concorde. But these things are rarely pushed.

Madame la Concierge was quickly arranged, her candle lighted. Then the other light was turned down.

When the door was slowly opened four police officers, headed by the commissary of the quarter, entered.

But they stopped abruptly on the threshold. The hideous skeleton with the candle confronted them. A sepulchral voice demanded,—

"Who knocks so loudly at an honest door?"

It is no impeachment of the courage and efficiency of the Paris police to say that the men recoiled in terror from this horrible apparition. So suddenly, in fact, that the two agents in the rear were precipitated headlong down the short flight. The other two vanished scarcely less hastily. A fifth man, who had evidently been following the agents at a respectful distance, received the full impact of the falling bodies, and with one terrified yell sank almost senseless on the stair.

This man was the cabman who had brought Jean Marot to Le Petit Rouge.

The veteran commissary, however, flinched only for

an instant. Having served many years in the Quartier Latin, he was no stranger to the pranks and customs of medical students. The next instant he had his foot in the doorway, to retain his advantage, and was calling his men a choice assortment of Parisian names. To emphasize this he entered and gave Madame la Concierge a kick that caused her poor old bones to rattle.

"For shame!" cried young Massard, laughingly, turning up the light. "To kick an old woman!"

"Now here, gentlemen, students,—you are a nice lot!"

"Thanks! Monsieur le Commissaire," replied Lerouge, with a polite bow.

"You are quite aware, gentlemen," continued the stern official, "that you are responsible at this moment for any injury to my men?"

"No, monsieur," retorted Lerouge in his dry fashion; "but, if any bones are broken we'll set 'em."

"Free of charge," added Villeroy.

"I want none of your impudence, monsieur! What's your name?"

"George Villeroy, 7 Rue du Pot de Fer, medical student, aged twenty-four, single, born at Tours."

Well these young roysterers knew the police formula! Armand Massard gave in his record at a nod. The veteran commissary wrote the replies down.

"And what is your name, monsieur?"

"Henri Lerouge, Monsieur le Commissaire."

"Ah! I think we have had the pleasure of meeting before this," observed the official. "A hundred francs that this is our man," he added under his breath.

Then, turning to his men, who had stolen in, shamefaced, one by one,—

"Dubat!"

"Yes, monsieur." A keen-eyed agent stepped forward and saluted military fashion.

"Do you recognize one of these gentlemen as the man who crossed the Pont de Solferino this evening with something——"

"Yes, Monsieur le Commissaire," — pointing promptly to Henri Lerouge,—"that's the man!"

"So. You may step aside, Dubat. Now where is that—oh! Monsieur Perriot?"

"Monsieur le Commissaire," responded the unhappy cabman, who had scarcely recovered from his mishap in the stairway. He limped painfully to the front.

"Now, Perriot, do you——"

"There he is, Monsieur le Commissaire," anticipated the cabman. "I'd know him among a thousand."

"Ah! And there we are. I thought so!" said the police official. "Now, Monsieur Lerouge," facing the latter with a catlike eye, "where's the body?"

The young man looked puzzled, very naturally, while his companions were speechless with astonishment.

The veteran police officer took in every detail of this and mentally admitted that it was clever, deucedly clever, acting.

"I say, *where is the body?*" he repeated.

"And I say," retorted Lerouge, with a calmness of tone and steadiness of eye that almost staggered the

old criminal catcher, "that I do not understand you, and am very patiently awaiting your explanation."

"Search the place!" curtly commanded the officer.

A clamorous protest arose from all three of the students. But the commissary of police waved them aside.

"It means that this man, Henri Lerouge, between six and seven o'clock this evening, carried a dead body from the Rue St. Honoré——"

"Faubourg St. Honoré, Monsieur le Commissaire," interrupted the cabman, feebly.

"——Faubourg St. Honoré, crossed the Pont de Solferino, where he was seen by Agent Dubat, and was brought here in a voiture of place, No. 37,420, driven by Jacques Perriot. That, arriving in front of this building, the said Lerouge paid the cabman and dismissed——"

"Pardon, Monsieur le Commissaire," again put in the coachman,—who was evidently trying to do his duty under unfavorable circumstances,—"pardon, monsieur, but he told me to wait."

"Oh, he told you to wait, did he? And why didn't you say that at the Commissariat, you stupid brute?" The officer was furious. "But he paid you, then?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"He paid you five francs and expected you to wait!" sarcastically.

"Yes, monsieur."

"Why?"

"He said he might want me, monsieur."

"Might want you. And why didn't you wait, you old fool?"

"Here? In the Rue Antoine Dubois, after dark, monsieur? And for a—a—'stiff'? Not for a hundred francs!"

The students roared with laughter. As the agents had returned a report meanwhile to the effect that there were no signs of any "subject" immediately in hand, the commissary was deeply chagrined.

"Now, gentlemen," he began, in a fatherly tone, "it is evident that a body has been taken from the street and brought here instead of being turned over to the police for the morgue and usual forms of identification. That body is possibly unimportant in itself, and would probably fall to your admirable institution eventually. But the law prescribes the proper course in such cases. We have traced that body to this place and to one of your number. Far be it from me to find fault with the desire of young gentlemen seeking to perfect their knowledge of anatomy for the benefit of humanity; but we must know where that body went from here."

The last very emphatically, with a stern gaze at Henri Lerouge.

"And on our part," answered the latter, with ill-subdued passion, "we say there is no body here, that none has been brought here to-night, that we have been together all day, and that we had but just arrived here before this unwarrantable intrusion; in short, that your petits mouchards there have lied!"

It was impossible not to believe him. Yet the evidence of the cabman, corroborated circumstantially in part by Agent Dubat, seemed equally positive and irresistible.

The commissary was nonplussed for a minute. He

looked sternly at Monsieur Perriot. The latter was nervously fumbling his glazed hat. Somebody had lied. The commissary decided that it was the unlucky cabman.

"Monsieur Perriot?"

"Y-yes, Monsieur le Commissaire."

"Have you got a five-franc piece about you?"

"Y—n—no—er——"

"Let me see it."

Now, the poor cabman had lost no time fortifying himself with an absinthe or two upon leaving his fare in the terrible Rue Antoine Dubois. He had changed the piece given him by Jean Marot.

"I haven't got——"

"You said this man gave you a five-franc piece, didn't you? Now, did you, or did you not? Answer!"

"Yes, Monsieur le——"

"Where is it? You said you came straight to the Commissariat,—you haven't had time to get drunk. Show me the piece! Come!"

"I drove to—I——"

"Come! Out with it!"

"But, Monsieur le Commissaire——"

"You haven't got a five-franc piece. Come, now; say!"

"No, monsieur. I——"

"Lie No. 2."

"But, monsieur, I stopped at the wine-shop of——"

"Then you didn't drive straight to the Commissariat?"

"I went——"

"Did you, or did you not? Yes or no!"

"No, monsieur."

"So! Lie No. 3."

The commissary got up full of wrath, and grasping the unfortunate cabby by the shoulder, spun him around with such force as to make the man's head swim.

"Dubat!"

"Monsieur?"

"Take this idiot to the post. I'll enter a complaint against him before the Correctionnelle in the morning. He shall forfeit his license for this amusement. Gentlemen, pardon me for this unnecessary intrusion. Either this fool Perriot has lied or has led us to the wrong number. I'll give him time to decide which. Allons!"

Led by the irate official the squad departed, Monsieur Perriot being hustled unceremoniously between two agents.

The young men left behind looked at each other for a minute without speaking, then broke into a chorus of laughter.

It was such a good one on the police.

"Ah!" exclaimed Villeroy, "if we only had that stiff here for a fact!"

"This joke on the agents must be got into the newspapers," said Lerouge. "It's too good to keep all to ourselves."

"Fact!" cried Massard, who had thrown himself on the cot.

"The joke is on Monsieur Perriot, I think," observed Villeroy.

"Whoever it is on," put in young Massard, "it is a better joke than you fellows imagine." And Massard went off into a paroxysm of laughter by himself.

"Que diable?"

"Oh! oh! oh!" roared Massard.

He had discovered the missing sheet and blanket and the grisette's hat. His companions regarded him attentively. But the young man merely went into fresh convulsions of merriment.

Lerouge suddenly raised his hand for silence. There was a low, half-timid rap at the door. It created the impression of some woman of the street.

"Come in!" cried Villeroy.

"Let her in," said Lerouge.

By which time the door had been opened and a tall, thin gentleman entered and immediately closed the door behind him.

"In-Inspector Loup!" ejaculated Lerouge.

"What! more police?" inquired Villeroy, sarcastically. "We are too much honored to-night."

"Excuse me, young gentlemen," observed the official, somewhat stiffly, but with a polite inclination of his lank body, "but I must be permitted to make an examination here—yes, I know; but Monsieur le Commissaire is rather—rather—you know—they will wait until I see for myself where the error is. Yes, error, I'm sure."

During this introduction the keen little fishy eyes searched the table, the floor, the walls, the cot in the corner whereon Massard now sat seriously erect, and, incidentally, every person in the room. They wound up this lightning tour of inspection by resting with the

last equivocal sentence upon some object on the floor under the table.

"Pardon me," he added, stepping briskly forward and grasping the lamp.

He brought the light to bear upon the object which had appeared to fascinate him, the wondering eyes of the three students becoming riveted to the same spot.

It was a wisp of light flaxen hair just tinted with gold.

The inspector replaced the lamp upon the dissecting-table and examined the lock of hair. It was still moist, and there were distinct traces of blood where it had been cut off from the head.

"Ah!"

The world of satisfaction in that ejaculation was not communicated to the students, who were speechless with astonishment.

"Yes," said the inspector, as if he were continuing an unimportant conversation, "Monsieur le Commissaire is rather—rather—show me the rest of the place, please," and without waiting for formal permission proceeded, lamp in hand, on his own account.

"So! One sleeps here?"

"Occasionally, monsieur."

He looked under the cot.

"Then you must have the rest of the bed; where is it?"

His quick eye had discovered the inconsistency of the mattress,—as, indeed, Massard himself had already done,—and his fertile brain jumped at once from cause to effect.

" Probably to wrap the body in. Where's the sink?"

In the little antechamber, redolent with the peculiar and indescribable odor of human flesh and its preservatives, was a long ice-chest, a big iron sink, an old-fashioned range, pots, pans, shelves with bottles, etc.

Massard hurriedly opened the chest, as if half expecting to see a human body there.

But Inspector Loup scarcely glanced at this receptacle for " subjects." His eyes sought and found the metal basin such as doctors use during operations.

The basin was still wet, and minute spots of red appeared upon its rim. A sponge lay near. It had recently been soaked. The inspector squeezed the sponge over the basin and obtained water stained with red.

" Blood," said he.

" Blood!" echoed the alarmed students.

" She's alive," said the inspector, more to himself than to his dumfounded auditors,—" alive, probably, else whoever brought her here would have kept her here."

He returned abruptly to the other room, and depositing the lamp, turned to Lerouge,—

" Were you expecting anybody else here to-night, monsieur?"

" Why, yes; Jean Marot——"

The possibility flashed upon the three young men at once, but it seemed too preposterous. The inspector had turned to the window and blown a shrill whistle.

" Pardon me, young gentlemen, but I'll not disturb you any longer than I can help. What is Jean Marot's address? Good! I will leave you company. You

will not mind? Dubat will entertain you. It is better than resting in the station-house, eh?"

With this pleasantry Inspector Loup hurried away, snatched a cab, and was driven rapidly to the address in the Faubourg St. Honoré.

* * * * * * *

Jean Marot was the son of a rich silk manufacturer of Lyon, and therefore lived in more comfortable quarters than most students, in a fashionable neighborhood on the right bank of the Seine. He had reached his lodgings scarcely three-quarters of an hour before Inspector Loup. But in that time he had stampeded the venerable concierge, got his still unconscious burden to bed and fetched a surgeon. The concierge had protested against turning the house into a hospital for vagrant women; but Jean was of an impetuous nature, and wilful besides, and when he was told that the last vacant chamber had been taken that day, he boldly carried the girl to his own rooms and placed her in his own bed. And when the concierge had reported this fact to Madame Goutran, that excellent lady, who had officiated as Jean's landlady for the past four years, shrugged her shoulders in such an equivocal way that the concierge concluded that her best interests lay in assisting the young man as much as possible.

Dr. Cardiac was not only one of the best surgeon-professors of the École de Médecine but Jean's father's personal friend. The young man felt that he could turn to the great surgeon in this emergency, though the latter was an expert not in regular practice.

The appearance of Inspector Loup threw the Goutran establishment into a fever of excitement. The

HIS STILL UNCONSCIOUS BURDEN

wrinkled old concierge who had declined to admit the stranger was ready to fall upon her knees before the director of the Secret Service. Madame Goutran hastened to explain why she had not reported the affair to the police department as the law required. She had not had time. It was so short a time ago that the case had been brought into her house,—in a few minutes she would have sent in the facts,—then, they expected every moment to ascertain the name of the young woman, which would be necessary to make the report complete.

Madame Goutran hoped that it would not involve her lodger, Monsieur Jean Marot, who was an excellent young man, though impulsive. He should have had the girl sent to the hospital. It was so absurd to bring her there, where she might die, and in any case would involve everybody in no end of difficulties, anyhow.

To a flood of such excuses and running observations Inspector Loup listened with immobile face, tightly closed lips, and wandering fishy eyes, standing in the corridor of the concierge lodge. He had not uttered a word, nor had he hurried the good landlady in her explanations and excuses. It was Inspector Loup's custom. He assumed the attitude of a professional listener. Seldom any one had ever resisted the subtle power of that silent interrogation. Even the most stubborn and recalcitrant were compelled to yield after a time; and those who had sullenly withstood the most searching and brutal interrogatories had broken down under the calm, patient, philosophical, crushing contemplation. Questions too often merely serve to put

people on their guard,—to furnish a cue to what should be withheld.

"And your lodger, madame?" he inquired, after Madame Goutran had run down, "can I see him?"

"Certainly, Monsieur l'Inspecteur. Pardon! I have detained you too long."

"Not at all, madame. One does not think of time in the presence of a charming conversationalist."

"Oh, thank you, monsieur! This way, Monsieur l'Inspecteur."

Inspector Loup gained the apartment of Jean Marot shortly after the united efforts of Dr. Cardiac and his amateur assistants had succeeded in producing decided signs of returning consciousness. The patient was breathing irregularly.

The police official entered the chamber, and, after a silent recognition of those present, looked long and steadily at the slight figure on the bed.

He then retired, beckoning Jean to follow him. Once in the petit salon, the inspector motioned the young man to a chair and looked him over for about half a minute. Whereupon Jean made a clean breast of what his listener practically already knew, and what he did not know had guessed.

"Bring me her clothing," said the inspector, when Jean had finished.

The young man brought the torn and soiled garments which had been removed from the girl.

Inspector Loup examined them in a perfunctory way, but apparently discovered nothing beyond the fact that they were typical charity clothes, which Jean had already decided for himself.

"Be good enough to ask Monsieur le Docteur to

step in here a few moments at his leisure," he finally said.

As soon as Jean had his back turned the inspector whipped out a knife, slit the lining of the bosom of the little dress, and taking therefrom the letter addressed to himself, noted at a glance that the seal was intact, tore it open, saw its contents and as quickly transferred the missive to his pocket.

"Well, doctor," he gravely inquired, "how about your young patient?"

"Uncertain, monsieur, but hopeful."

"She will recover, then?"

"I think so, but it will be some time. She must be removed to a hospital."

"Yes, of course,—of course. But you will report to me where she is taken from here, Monsieur le Docteur?"

"Oh, yes,—certainly. Though perhaps the girl's friends——"

"She has no friends," said the inspector.

"What! You know her, then?"

"It is Mademoiselle Fouchette."

"A nobody's child, eh?" asked the doctor.

"Mademoiselle Fouchette is the child of the police," said Inspector Loup.

He slowly retired down-stairs, through the court and passage-way, reaching the street. Then as he walked away he drew from his pocket the letter he had extracted from the little dress.

"So! Sister Agnes is prompt and to the point. These Jesuitical associations are hotbeds of treason and intrigue! They are inconsistent with civil and religious liberty. We'll see!"

CHAPTER VII

When Fouchette opened her eyes it was to see three strange faces at her bedside,—the faces of Dr. Cardiac, Jean Marot, and a professional nurse.

But she had regained consciousness long before she could see, her eyes being in bandages, and had passively listened to the soft goings and comings and low conversations and whispered directions, without saying anything herself or betraying her growing curiosity.

These sounds came to her vaguely and brokenly at first, then forced themselves on her attention connectedly. Surely she was not at Le Bon Pasteur! Then where was she? And finally the recollection of recent events rushed upon her, and her poor little head seemed to be on the point of bursting.

Things finally appeared quite clear, until her eyes were free and she saw for the first time her new surroundings, when she involuntarily manifested her surprise.

It certainly was not a hospital, as she had imagined the place. The sunny chamber, with its tastefully decorated walls hung with pictures, the foils over the door,—through which she saw a still more lovely room, —the voluptuous divan and its soft cushions, the heavy Turkish rugs, the rich damask hangings of her bed,—no; it certainly was not a hospital.

It was the most beautiful room Fouchette had ever seen,—such as her fancy had allotted to royal blood,—at least to the nobility. To awaken in such a place was

like the fairy tales Sister Agnes had read to her long ago.

"Well, mademoiselle," said the old surgeon, cheerily, "we're getting along,—getting along, eh, Monsieur Marot?"

"Admirably!" said Jean.

Fouchette glanced from one to the other. The doctor she had long recognized by voice and touch; but this young man, was he the prince of this palace?

The eyes of the pair rested upon each other for the moment inquiringly.

Both Fouchette and Jean concluded this examination with a sigh.

Fouchette had recognized in him the young man who marched by her side in the Place de la Concorde,—only a rioter. He could not live here.

Jean Marot, who thought he had seen something in this girl besides her hair to remind him of the woman he loved, acknowledged himself in error. It had been a mere fancy,—he dismissed it.

He turned away and stood looking gloomily into the street. But the young man saw nothing. He was thinking of the unfortunate turn of political events in France that had arrayed friend against friend, brother against brother.

It was social revolution—anarchy!

Now his friend Lerouge and he had quarrelled,—exchanged blows. They had wrangled before, but within the bounds of student friendship. Blows had now changed this friendship to hatred. Blows from those whom we love are hardest to forgive,—they are never forgotten.

Yet it was not this friendship in itself that particularly concerned Jean Marot. Through it he had calculated on reaching something more vital to his happiness.

Henri Lerouge had introduced him to Mlle. Remy. It was in the Jardin du Luxembourg. They had met but for a brief minute. The presentation had been coldly formal,—reluctant. Yet in that time, in the midst of the usual conventionalities, Jean had looked into a pair of soulful blue eyes that had smiled upon him, and Jean was lost.

His hope of meeting her again lay in and through Lerouge,—and now they had quarrelled; and about a Jew!

The fine blonde hair and slender figure of this girl—this "child of the police"—had reminded Jean of Mlle. Remy. She possessed the same kind of hair. It was this mental association that prompted him to carry the unknown to his own lodgings as described. This impulse of compassion and association was strengthened by his narrow escape from being her slayer. In fact, it was the best thing to have done under all the circumstances.

Now that the causes and the impulse had disappeared together, he began to feel bored. The "child of the police" was in his way,—the police might look after her. Jean Marot had troubles of his own.

As for Fouchette, she silently regarded the motionless figure at the window, wondering, thinking, on her part, of many things. When it had disappeared in the adjoining room she beckoned to the doctor.

"The young man, Monsieur Marot?" she asked, feebly. "Is this his——"

"It is his apartment, mademoiselle," the doctor anticipated.

"Tell me——"

"Monsieur Marot found you in the street near by, after the riot of the 25th of October, and brought you here,—temporarily, you know."

"Monsieur Marot is very good," she murmured.

"Excellent young man!" said the doctor. "A trifle obstinate, but still a very excellent young man, mademoiselle."

The girl was silent for a minute, as if lost in thought.

"Is this his—his bedchamber, doctor?"

"Yes, mademoiselle."

"I must be moved," she said, promptly. "You understand? I must be removed at once. Take me to a hospital, please!"

"Oh, don't excite yourself about it, my child. Soon enough—when you are able."

"What day of the month is——"

"This? The 5th of November."

"Ten days! Ten days!"

"Yes,—you have had a narrow call, mademoiselle."

"And I owe my life to you, doctor."

"To Monsieur Marot, mademoiselle."

"Ah! but you——"

"If it hadn't been for him I would never have seen you, child."

He spoke very gently and in a subdued voice that reached only her ear. Another pause.

"It is all the more important that I should not trouble him,—disturb him any longer than necessary. You understand?"

"Very truly, mademoiselle," replied he; "very thoughtful of you,—very womanly. It does you credit, Mademoiselle Fouchette."

"What? You, then, know my name?"

"Certainly." The doctor observed her surprise with a genial smile.

"I am very grateful,"—that they should know her for what she was and yet have been so good to her moved her deeply,—"I am very grateful, monsieur. But how did you know it was me, Fouchette?"

"Well, there is one man in Paris who knows you——"

"Inspector Loup?" she asked, quickly.

"Inspector Loup," said he.

"And he knows where I am,—certainly, for he knows everything,—everything!"

"Not quite, possibly, but enough."

"I must see Inspector Loup, doctor; yes, I must see him at once. When was he here?"

"Within the hour in which you were brought," said the doctor.

He was not disposed to be communicative on the subject of the Secret Service, or about its director, having a healthy contempt for the system of official espionage deemed necessary to any sort of French government, Royalist, Napoléonic, or Republican. And he wondered what mysterious band could unite the interests of this charity child with the interests of the government of France.

"Where are my clothes, doctor?" she suddenly inquired, half raising herself on her elbow.

"Oh! là, là! Why, you can't go now! It is impossible! The inspector can come and see you here, can't he?"

"But where are my clothes? Are they——"

"They're here, all right."

"Let me see them, please."

"Very good; but don't get excited,—nobody will run away with them; bless my soul! Nobody has had them except—except the nurse and Inspector Loup."

"He?"

"Yes, mademoiselle,—for identification."

"Oh!"

Fouchette was nervous. She had been reminded of the letter by the first mention of the inspector's name. Had anybody found the letter? Was it there still? Supposing it had been lost! What was this letter, anyhow? It must be very important, or the senders would have mailed it in the regular way. She felt that she dared not betray its presence by pushing the demand for her clothing.

"It is very curious, too," added the doctor, "how that man could identify you by means of clothing he had never before seen. He probably had information from where you came, with your description."

"Y-yes, monsieur,—I——"

Fouchette had never thought of that. It did not comfort her, as may well be imagined.

"I'll speak to the nurse about the clothes——"

"Pardon! but it is unnecessary, doctor. I only wanted to know if they were—were safe, you know.

No; never mind. I thank you very much. I shall need them only when I am removed, which I hope will be soon."

* * * * * * *

In the Rue St. Jacques stands an old weather-stained, irregular pile of stone, inconspicuous in a narrow, crooked street lined with similar houses. The grim walls retreat from the first floor to the roof, in the monolithic style of the Egyptian tomb. Beneath the first floor is the usual shop,—a rôtisserie patronized by the scholars of two centuries,—famed of Balzac, de Musset, Dumas, Hugo, and a myriad lesser pens.

The other houses of the neighborhood are equally oblivious to modern opinion. They consent to lean against each other while jointly turning an indifferent face to the world, like a man about whose ugliness there is no dispute. No two run consecutively with the walks, and all together present a sky-line that paralyzes calculation.

The historic street at this point is a lively market during the business day. Its sidewalks being only wide enough for the dogs to sun themselves without danger from passing vehicles, it is necessary for the passers to take that risk by walking in the roadway. Those who do not care to assume any risks go around by way of Rue Gay-Lussac,—especially after midnight, when the street enjoys its personal reputation. The Panthéon is just around the corner, and the ancient Sorbonne, Louis le Grand, and the College of France line the same street on the next block, and have stood there for some hundreds of years; but, all the same, timid people certainly prefer to reach

them by a roundabout way rather than by this section of Rue St. Jacques.

Mlle. Fouchette had accepted a home in the Rue St. Jacques and in this particular building because other people did not wish to live there, which made rooms cheap.

If you had cared to see what Mlle. Fouchette proudly called "home" you might have raised and let fall an old-fashioned iron knocker that sent a long reverberating roar down the tunnel-like entrance, to be lost in some hidden court beyond. Then a slide would slyly uncover a little brass "judas," disclosing a little, black, hard eye. Assuming that this eye was satisfied with you, the slide would be closed with a snap, bolts unshot, bars swung clear, and the heavy, iron-clamped door opened by a rascally-looking man whose blouse, chiefly, distinguished him from the race orang-outang.

Once within, you would notice that the door mentioned was ribbed with wrought iron and that two lateral bars of heavy metal were used to secure it from within. It dates from the Reign of Terror.

Having passed this formidable barrier, you would follow the tunnel to a square court paved with worn granite, enter a rear passage, and mount a narrow stone stairway, the steps of which are so worn as to leave an uncertain footing. If it happens to be in the night or early morning, the brass knobs in the centre of the doors will be ornamented with milk-bottles. There are four of these doors on every landing, and consequently four "appartements" on each floor; but as each wing seems to have been built in a different age from the others, and no two archi-

tects were able to accurately figure on reaching the same level, the effect is as uncertain as the stairs.

Mlle. Fouchette's "home" consisted of but a single square room fronting on the court by two windows with bogus balconies. The daylight from these windows showed a fireplace of immense size, and out of all proportion to the room, a bed smothered in the usual alcove by heavy curtains, a divan improvised from some ancient article of furniture, a small round table, and an easy-chair, and two or three others not so easy. There was one distinguished exception to the general effect of old age and hard usage, and this was a modern combination bureau, washstand, and dressing-table with folding mirror attachment, which when shut down was as demure and dignified as an upright piano.

The effective feature of a place the entire contents of which might have been extravagantly valued at twenty-five dollars was the exquisite harmony of colors. This effect is common to French interiors, where there is also a common tendency to over-decoration. The harmony began in the cheap paper on the walls, extended to bed and window draperies, and ended in the tissue-paper lamp-shade that at night lent a softened, rhythmical tone to the whole. This genial color effect was a delicate suggestion of blue, and the result was a doll-like daintiness that was altogether charming.

The autographic fan mania had left its mark over the divan in the shape of a gigantic fan constructed of little fans and opening out towards the ceiling. A few pen-and-ink and pencil sketches and studies,

apparently the cast-off of many studios, were tacked up here and there. The high mantel bore an accumulation of odds and ends peculiar to young women of low means and cheap friendships. That was all. But a French girl can get the best results from a room, as she can from a hat, with the least money.

Mlle. Fouchette had reached all of this private magnificence through a singular concatenation of circumstances.

First, Inspector Loup.

That distinguished penologist had laid his hands upon Mlle. Fouchette in no uncertain way.

An order of arrest was at this very moment lying in a certain pigeon-hole at the Préfecture. She had seen it. The name of "Mlle. Fouchette" appeared in the body thereof in big, fat, round letters, and a complete description, age, height, color of hair and eyes, and other particulars appeared across the back of this terrible paper, which was duly signed and ready for service.

A tap of the bell,—a push of an electric button,—and Mlle. Fouchette would be in prison.

There were five distinct counts against her, set forth in ponderous and damning legal phraseology and briefed alphabetically with a precision that carried conviction:

"A.—Vagrant—no home—supposed to have come from Nantes.

"B.—Consort of thieves—confession of life convict called 'le Cochon,' drawer 379, R. M. L. 29.

"C.—Go-between of robbers of the wood of Vincennes and receivers of stolen goods. Confession of

M. Podvin, wine merchant, now serving term of twenty-one years for highway robbery, drawer 1210, R. M. L. 70.

"D.—Fugitive from State institution, where sent by lawful authority. See Le Bon Pasteur, Nancy. R. I. 2734.

"E.—Lost or destroyed public document addressed to the Préfecture and confided to her care under her false representation of being an authorized agent of that department of the government."

The service of this dreadful order of arrest, behind which crouched these crimes ready to rise and spring upon her, was suspended by Inspector Loup. For which tenderness and mercy Fouchette was merely to report to the Secret Service bureau in accordance with a preconcerted arrangement.

Second, Madeleine.

Mlle. Fouchette had scarcely ceased to bless Inspector Loup for his forbearance and kind consideration and was crossing the Pont au Change towards the right bank when she encountered a familiar face. She was somewhat startled at first. Her catalogue of familiar faces was so limited that it was a sensation.

It was the face she had seen through the iron gate on the road to Charenton long, long ago!

Somewhat fuller, somewhat redder, with suspicious circles under the lustrous eyes, yet, unmistakably, the same face. The plump figure looked still more robust, and the athletic limbs showed through the scant bloomer bicycle suit.

The owner of this face and figure did not recognize

in the other the petite chiffonnière de Charenton. That would have been too much to expect.

"Pardon! but, mademoiselle——"

Fouchette boldly accosted her nevertheless.

"Pardon! You don't remember me? I'm Fouchette!"

"Fouchette?"

"Yes, mademoiselle. You do not remember the poor little ragpicker of Charenton? But of course not,—it was long ago, and I have changed."

The other stared at her with her big black eyes.

"I was hungry,—you gave me a nice sandwich; it was kind,—and I do not easily forget, mademoiselle,—though I'm only Fouchette,—no!"

"What! Fouchette—the—dame! it is impossible!"

"Still, it is true, mademoiselle," insisted Fouchette, laughing.

"Ah! I see—I know—why, it *is* Fouchette! 'Only Fouchette'—oh! sacré bleu! To think——"

She embraced the girl between each exclamation, then held her out at arm's length and looked her over critically, from head to feet and back again, then kissed her some more on both cheeks, laughing merrily the while, and attracting the amused attention of numerous passers.

Mlle. Fouchette realized, vaguely, that the laugh was not that of the pretty garden of years ago; she saw that the flushed cheeks were toned down by cosmetics; she noted the vinous smell on the woman's breath.

"Heavens! but how thin and pale you are, petite!" exclaimed the bicycliste.

"It is true. I have just come out of the hospital—only a few days——"

"Pauvrette! Come! Let us celebrate this happy reunion," said the other, grasping Fouchette's arm and striding along the bridge. "You shall tell me everything, dear."

"But, Mademoiselle—er——"

"Madeleine,—just Madeleine, Fouchette."

"Mademoiselle Madeleine——"

"I live over here,—au Quartier Latin. It is the only place—the place to see life. It is Paris! C'est la vie joyeuse!"

"Ah! then you no longer live at——"

"Let us begin here, Fouchette," interrupted Mlle. Madeleine, gravely, "and let us never talk about Charenton,—never! It cannot be a pleasant subject to you,—it is painful to me."

"Oh, pardon me, mademoiselle, I——"

"So it is understood, is it not?"

"With all my heart, mademoiselle!" said Fouchette, not sorry to conclude such a desirable bargain.

"Very good. We begin here——"

"Now."

"Yes, and as if we had never before seen or heard of each other."

"Exactly."

"Good! Now, what are you doing for a living, Fouchette?"

"Nothing."

"Good! So am I."

They laughed quite a great deal at this remarkable coincidence as they went along. And when Mlle. Fou-

chette protested that she must do something,—sewing, or something,—Mlle. Madeleine laughed yet more loudly, though Mlle. Fouchette saw nothing humorous in the situation.

"Nobody works in the Quartier Latin," said Madeleine. "C'est la vie joyeuse."

"But one must eat, mademoiselle——"

"Very sure! Yes, and drink; but——"

Mlle. Madeleine scrutinized her companion closely,—evidently Mlle. Fouchette was in earnest. Such naïveté in a ragpicker was absurd, preposterous!

"Well, there are the studios," suggested Madeleine.

"The—the studios?"

"Yes,—the painters, you know; only models are a drug in the market here——"

"Models?"

"Yes; and, then, unless one has the figure——" she glanced at Fouchette doubtfully. "I'm getting too stout for anything but Roman mothers, Breton peasants, etc. You're too thin even for an angel or ballet dancer."

"I'm sure I'd rather be a danseuse than an angel," said Fouchette,—"that is, if I've got any choice in the matter."

"But one hasn't. You've got to pose in whatever character they want. Did you ever pose?"

"As a painter's model? Never."

Having ensconced themselves in a popular café restaurant on Boulevard St. Michel, the pair ordered an appetizing déjeuner, and Madeleine proceeded to enlighten Fouchette on the subject of the profession,

—the character and peculiarities of various artists, their exactions of models, the recompense for holding a certain pose for a given time, the difficulty and art of resuming exactly the same pose, the studios for classes in the nude, the students generally and their pranks and games,—especially upon this latter branch of the business.

Mlle. Fouchette listened to all this with breathless interest, as may be imagined. For it was the opening up of a new world to her. The vivid description of the dancing and fun at the Bal Bullier filled her with delight and enthusiasm. She mentally vowed Madeleine as charming and condescending as ever. The girl had volunteered, good-naturedly, to make the rounds of the studios with her and get her "on the list." When Madeleine offered to engineer Fouchette's début at the Bullier the latter cheerfully paid for the repast the other had rather lavishly ordered.

The mere chance rencontre had changed Fouchette's entire plan of life. She had bravely started for the grand boulevards with the idea of securing employment among the myriad dressmaking establishments of that neighborhood, and thus putting to practical use her industrial knowledge gained at Le Bon Pasteur.

Fortunately for her, Monsieur Marot's generous liberality had placed her beyond immediate need. A matron had equipped her with a new though simple costume and had given her a sum of money as she left,—merely saying that she acted according to instructions; but Fouchette felt that it was from her prince.

It was on the advice of Madeleine that Fouchette had secured this place in the Rue St. Jacques.

"It will make you independent and respected," said the practical grisette. "You've got the money now; you won't have it after a while. Take my advice,—fix the place up,—gradually, don't you know? You'll soon make friends who will help you if you're smart; and one must have a place to receive friends, n'est-ce pas? And the hotels garnis rob one shamefully!"

And, while Mlle. Fouchette did not dream of the real significance of this advice, she took it. The details were hers. She knew the value of a sou about as well as any woman in Paris, and no instructions were required on the subject of expenditures. She collected, piece by piece, at bottom prices, those articles which had to be purchased; made, stitch by stitch, such as required the needle.

To Mlle. Fouchette the simple, cheaply furnished and somewhat tawdry little room in the Rue St. Jacques was luxury. She was proud of it. She was perfectly contented with it. It was home.

With the confidence of one who has seen the worst and for whom every change must be for the better, Fouchette had succeeded where others would have been discouraged. This confidence to others often seemed reckless indifference, and consequently carried a certain degree of conviction.

Among a certain class of wild young men and confirmed Bohemians Fouchette had quickly achieved a sort of vogue which attaches to an eccentric woman in Paris. She was eccentric in that she danced eccentric dances, was the most reckless in the sportive circle, the

highest kicker at the Bullier, and, most of all, in that she had no lovers. Unlike the Mimi Pinsons of the Murger era of the quarter, Fouchette was the most notorious of grisettes without being a grisette. At the fête of the student painters at the Bullier she had been borne on a palanquin clad only in a garland of roses amid thousands of vociferous young people of both sexes. The same night she had kicked a young man's front teeth out for presuming on liberties other girls of her set would have considered trifling.

Fouchette at once became the reigning sensation of "la vie joyeuse." Having had little or no pleasure in the world up to her entrée here, she had plunged into the gayety of the quarter with an abandon that within two short months had made the Bohemian tales of Henri Murger tame reading.

Her pedal dexterity in a quarrel had won for her the sobriquet of "La Savatière."

The "savate" as practised by the French boxer is the art of using the feet the same as the hands, and it is a means of offence not to be despised. It is the feline art that utilizes all four limbs in combat. Fouchette acquired it in her infancy,—in the fun and frequent scrimmages of the quarter she found occasion to practise it. Mlle. Fouchette's temper was as eccentric as her dances.

On the wall of Mlle. Fouchette's room hung a rude crayon of that damsel by a prominent caricaturist. It was a front view of her face, in which the artist had maliciously accentuated, in a few bold strokes, the feline fulness of jaws, the half-contracted eyelids, the

alert eyes, and general catlike expression,—to be seen only when Mlle. Fouchette was in anger. It was the subtle touch of the master, and was labelled "La Petite Chatte."

"Ah, cè!" she would say to curious visitors,—"it is not me; it is the mind of Léandre."

As Mlle. Fouchette stood tiptoeing before a little folding mirror on the high mantel, the reflection showed both front and sides of a face that betrayed none of these characteristics. In fact, the blonde hair, smoothed flat to the skull and draping low over the ears, after the fashion set by a popular actress of the day, gave her the demure look of a young woman who might shriek at the sight of a man in his shirt-sleeves. Which shows that it is exceedingly unsafe to judge by appearances,—of a woman, especially. The slender figure showed that the physical indications in the delicately rounded arm, the taper fingers, and shapely feet were justified by the proportionate development of the rest of her anatomy. Nature had been gentle rather than generous. Mlle. Fouchette was in demand for angels and ballet dancers.

Her face, evidently, did not suit Mlle. Fouchette, since she was at this moment in the act of touching it up and making it over with colors from an enamelled box,—a trick of the Parisienne of every grade.

Mlle. Fouchette had scarcely put the finishing touches to her artistic job when her door vibrated under a vigorous blow.

She paused, hesitated, flushed with symptoms of a rising temper. One does not feel kindly towards persons hurling themselves thus against one's private

door. But the noise continued, as if somebody beat the heavy planking with the fist, and Mlle. Fouchette threw the door open.

Mlle. Madeleine staggered into the room.

"How's this? melon!"

"Oh! so you're here,—you are not there!" gasped the intruder, falling into a seat and fixing her black eyes sullenly upon the other.

Mlle. Fouchette closed the door with a snap and confronted her visitor with a hardening face.

"I thought it was you, Fouchette!"

"Madeleine, you're drunk!"

"No, no, no, no! I have had such a—a—turn, deary,—pardon me! But she had the same figure,—the same hair,—mon Dieu!"

"Who?"

"Oh! I don't know, Fouchette,—the woman with him, you know,—with Henri, Fouchette!"

The speaker seemed overcome with mingled terror and anger. She stopped to collect her thoughts,—to get her breath.

"What a fool you are, Madeleine! I wouldn't go on that way for the best man living! No!"

And Fouchette thought of Jean Marot, and mentally included him.

"Oh! Fouchette, dear, you do not know! You cannot know! You never loved! You cannot love! You are calm and cold and indifferent,—it is your nature. Mine! I am consumed by fire,—it grips my very vitals! Ah! Fouchette!"

"Bah! Madeleine, it is absinthe," said Fouchette, only half pityingly.

"No, no, no, no!" moaned the other, covering her face with her hands.

"So this Lerouge has disappeared, eh? Well, then, let him go, fool! Are there not others?"

"Mon Dieu! Fouchette, how you talk!"

"Who is this lucky woman?"

"I do not know,—I do not know! Pardon me for thinking it, Fouchette, but I was half crazy,—I thought but just now that it was—was you!"

"Idiot!"

"Yes, I know; but one does not stop to reason where one loves."

"As if I would throw myself into the arms of any man! You sicken me, Madeleine. But I thought this Lerouge, whoever he is,—I never even saw him,—had disappeared——"

"From his place in the Rue Monge, yes. Fouchette, why should he run away?"

"With a girl he likes better than you? What a question! All men do that, you silly goose!"

"He said it was his sister. Bah! I know better, Fouchette. Her name's Remy,—yes, Mademoiselle Remy. And a little, skinny, tow-headed thing like—oh! no, no, no! Fouchette, pardon me! I didn't mean that! I'm half crazy!"

"I believe you," said Fouchette.

"Yes, Monsieur Marot told me——"

Mlle. Fouchette had started so perceptibly that the speaker stopped. Mlle. Fouchette had carefully guarded her own secrets, but this sudden surprise was——

"Well, melon!" she snapped.

"I—why, I didn't know you——"

"What did Monsieur Marot tell you?" demanded the other.

"That her name was Remy."

"Oh!" said Mlle. Fouchette, coldly.

"So you know Monsieur Marot? They say he resembles Lerouge, but I don't think so. Anyhow, he's in love with Mademoiselle Remy."

Mlle. Fouchette's steel-blue eyes flashed fire.

"You lie!" she screamed, in sudden frenzy. "You lie! you drunken gossip!"

Mlle. Madeleine was on her feet in an instant, but Fouchette's right foot caught her on the point of the chin, and the stout grisette went down like a log.

CHAPTER VIII

MADELEINE came to her senses to find her antagonist bending over her with a wet towel and weeping hysterically.

They immediately embraced and wept together.

Then Mlle. Fouchette rummaged in the deep closet in the wall and brought forth a bottle of cognac. Whereupon Madeleine not only suddenly dried her tears but began to smile. Half an hour later she had forgotten all unpleasantness and went away leaving many endearments behind her.

Mlle. Fouchette was scarcely less astonished at her own outburst than had been her friend Madeleine, when she had time to think of it.

What could Jean Marot be to her, Fouchette? Nothing.

Suppose he did love this Mlle. Remy, what of it? Nothing.

Monsieur Marot was a being afar off, inaccessible, almost intangible,—like the millionaire employer to his humble workman, covered with sweat and grime, at the bottom of the shop.

When Mlle. Fouchette thought of him it was only in that way, and she would have no more thought of even so much as wishing for him than she would have wished for the moon to play with. She had met him, by accident, twice since her departure from his roof, and the first time he had a hurried, uneasy air, as if he feared she might presume to detain him. The second time he had gone out of his way to stop her and talk

to her and to inquire what she was doing and how she was getting along,—condescendingly, as one might interest himself for the moment in a former servant.

In the mean time Jean Marot had held himself aloof from "la vie joyeuse" and from the reunions at "Le Petit Rouge." It attracted the attention of his associates.

"First Lerouge, now it's Jean," growled Villeroy. "Comes of loafing along the quais nights,—it's malaria."

"He's greatly changed," remarked another student.

"It's worry," said another.

"Probably debts," observed young Massard, thinking of his chief affliction.

"Bah! that kind of worry never pulls you down like this," retorted a companion.

"Now, don't get personal; but debts do worry a fellow,—debts and women."

"Put women first; debts follow as a necessary corollary."

"He ought to hunt up Lerouge. What the devil is in that Lerouge, anyhow?"

"More women," said Massard.

"And debts, eh?"

"Oh, well," continued Massard, "if she is a pretty woman——"

"She's more than pretty," cut in George Villeroy,—"she's a beauty!"

"Hear! hear! Très bien!"

But the student turned to the "subject" on the "dressing-table," humming a gay chanson of Musset:

"'Nous allons chanter à la ronde,
Si vous voulez.
Que je l'adore, et qu'elle est blonde
Comme les blés!'"

"A man never should neglect his lectures for anything, and that's what both Lerouge and Jean are doing," remarked a serious young man, looking up from his book.

"Yes, and the first thing our comrade Marot will know, he'll be recalled by his choleric father. He's taken to absinthe, too——"

"Which is worse."

"*The* worst——"

"And prowling——"

"And moping off alone."

"What's the lady's name?"

"Mademoiselle Fouchette."

"What! the wild, untamed——"

"La Savatière? Nonsense!"

"Here's a lock of her hair in evidence," remarked Massard, going to a drawer and taking out a bit of paper. "It is as clear to my mind as it was to the police that Monsieur Marot had that girl, or some other like her, up here that night."

"Let me see that," said Villeroy.

"I found it on the floor the next day,—the inspector took away quite a bunch of it," continued the young man, as the other examined the lock.

"There are two women who have hair like that," said Villeroy,—"Fouchette and the girl who goes with Lerouge. Now, which is it?"

"Her name is Remy,—Mademoiselle Remy," ob-

served Massard; "and, as George says, she's a beauty——"

"Which cannot be said of La Savatière."

"No; and yet——"

"Lerouge keeps his beauty mighty close," interrupted Massard. "I never saw her but once, and she reminded me of that little devil, Fouchette, who stands in with the police, or she would have been locked up a dozen times."

"Very likely," observed Villeroy.

* * * * * * *

It was now Mardi Gras, and the whole Ville Lumière was en fête. The left bank of the Seine, the resort of nearly twenty thousand students, was especially joyous.

There was one young man, however, who chose to be alone, and he stood apart from the world, leaning over the worn parapet of the Pont Neuf, gazing idly on the rushing waters of the Seine.

Jean Marot loved the noble span that for more than three hundred years had connected the ancient Isle de la Cité with the mainland. A long line of kings, queens, emperors, princes, princesses, and noblemen of every degree had lived and passed the Pont Neuf. Royal knights, stout men-at-arms, myriads of mailed warriors and citizen soldiers, countless multitudes of men and women, had come and gone above these massive stone arches of three centuries.

Yet the young man thought not of these. His mind was occupied by one little, slender, fair-haired woman, and that one unattainable. Had he analyzed his new mental condition, he might have marvelled that the

little winged god could have aimed so straight and let fly so unexpectedly. True love, however, does not come of reasoning, but rather in spite of it. And, to do Jean's Latin race justice, he never thought of doing such a thing, and thus spared his love being reduced to a palpable absurdity. The bronze shadow of that royal Latin lover, Henri IV., looked down upon the modern Frenchman approvingly.

A sharp shower of confetti and the laughter of young girls roused the young man from his revery and brought his thoughts down to date.

"Monsieur has forgotten that Boulevard St. Michel is en fête," said a rich contralto voice behind him.

He turned to receive a handful of confetti dashed smartly in his face and to look into a pair of bold black eyes.

"Mon Dieu! It is Monsieur Marot!"

"Hello! Madeleine,—you, Fouchette?"

"Yes, monsieur," replied the latter gayly. "And you,—is it a day to dream of casting one's self into the Seine?"

Meanwhile, the object of this raillery was busily extracting bits of colored paper from his eyebrows and neck,—a wholly useless proceeding, for both girls immediately deluged him with a fresh avalanche.

Madeleine was in her costume à la bicyclette, her sailor hat tipped forward to such a degree that it was necessary for her to elevate her stout chin in order to see anything on a level. Mlle. Fouchette affected the clinging, fluffy style of costume best suited to her figure, while her rare blonde hair à la Merode was her distinguishing feature. She dominated the older

and stouter girl as if the latter were an irresponsible junior.

Jean Marot knew very well the type of grisette indigenous to the Quartier Latin.

The day justified all sorts of familiarity, and his black velvet béret and flowing black scarf were an invitation to fraternity, good fellowship, and confidence.

Both young women were in high spirits and carried in bags of fancy netting with tricolor draw-strings their surplus stock of confetti, and an enormous quantity of the surplus stock of other manifestants in their hair and clothing. As fast as Jean picked out the confetti from his neck Mlle. Madeleine playfully squandered other handfuls on him, winding up by covering the young man with the entire contents of her bag at a single coup.

"Ah! Madeleine!"

"Monsieur will buy us some more," replied that young woman.

"How foolish!" said Mlle. Fouchette, affecting a charming modesty. She had a way of cocking her fair head to one side like a bird.

"Never mind, mes enfants," said Jean. "Come along."

The three linked arms and passed off the bridge and up the Rue Dauphine and Rue de Monsieur le Prince for Boulevard St. Michel, the lively young women distributing confetti in liberal doses and taking similar punishment in utmost good humor, Jean not sorry for the time being at finding this temporary distraction. He had generously replenished the pretty

bags from the first baraque, though they were quickly emptied again in the narrow Rue de Monsieur le Prince, where a hot engagement between students and "filles du quartier" was in progress.

Mlle. Madeleine was fairly choking with laughter. She had just caught a young man with his mouth open, by a trick of the elbow; and as he mutely sputtered confetti her petite blonde companion caught her long skirt aside and kicked his hat off. This "coup de pied" was administered with such marvellous grace and dexterity that even the victim joined in the roar of laughter that followed it. A thin smile spread over her pale face as Jean looked at her.

"La Savatière,—bravo!" cried a youth.

"C'est le lapin du Luxembourg," said another.

"It is Mademoiselle Fouchette."

"There, monsieur," remarked Fouchette, slyly, "you see I'm getting known in the quarter."

"I don't wonder," said Jean, laughing.

They found seats beneath the awnings at the Taverne du Panthéon. The rain of confetti was getting to be a deluge. He asked them what they would have.

"Un ballon, garçon," said Mlle. Fouchette, promptly.

This designated a small glass of beer, served in a balloon-shaped glass like a large claret glass.

Madeleine also would take "un ballon," Jean contenting himself with the usual "bock,"—an ordinary glass of beer.

Each covered the beer with the little saucer, to protect it from the occasional gust of confetti that

even found its way to the extreme rear of the half a hundred sidewalk sitters.

Mlle. Fouchette had been studying the young man from the corners of her eyes. She saw him greatly changed. His handsome face betrayed marks of worry or dissipation,—she decided on the latter. What could a young man in his enviable position have to worry about? Was it possible that——

"Monsieur," she began at once, with the air of an ingénue, "they say you strongly resemble one Lerouge, —that you are often taken one for the other. Is it so?"

He glanced at her inquiringly, while Madeleine patted the ground with her foot.

"Have you ever seen Henri Lerouge?" he asked.

"No, never," replied Fouchette.

"Does he look like me, Madeleine?"

"Not much, monsieur," responded that damsel. "Have you seen him,—have you seen Lerouge lately?"

"No,—no," said he.

"From what I learn," remarked Mlle. Fouchette, with a precision and nonchalance that defied suspicion, "Monsieur Lerouge is probably off in some sweet solitude unknown to vulgar eye enjoying his honeymoon."

Madeleine shot one furious glance at the speaker; but not daring to trust her tongue, she suddenly excused herself and disappeared in the throng.

Jean saw that she had been cut to the quick, and her abrupt action served for the moment to dull the pain at his own heart. He concealed his resentment at this malicious—but, after all, this "child of the

police" could not know. He shifted the talk to Madeleine.

"You seem to have offended her, mademoiselle."

"Bah! Madeleine is that jealous——"

"What? Lerouge?"

"Of Lerouge. Can't you see?"

"No,—that is, I didn't know that she had anything in common with Lerouge."

"Ah, ça! When she flies into a rage at the mention of him and another woman? Monsieur is not gifted with surprising penetration."

"But Mademoiselle Madeleine is rather a handsome girl," he observed, tentatively. While he mentally resolved not to be robbed of his own secret he was not averse to gaining any information this girl might possess.

"Perhaps," said she,—"for those who admire the robust style. But you should see the other; she's an angel!"

"Indeed?"

It was hard to put this in a tone of indifference, and he felt her eyes upon him.

"Yes, monsieur."

"I'd like to see her. You know angels are not to be seen every day."

"Monsieur Lerouge can be trusted, I suppose, to render these visions as fleeting and rare as possible."

He winced perceptibly.

"But Madeleine has magnificent eyes," he suggested.

"This other has the eyes of heaven, monsieur."

"And as for figure——"

"Chut! monsieur is joking,—the form of a Normandie nurse! Mademoiselle Remy is the sculptor's dream!"

Jean Marot laughed. This unstinted praise of the girl who had fascinated him,—who had robbed him of his rest,—who had without an effort, and unconsciously, taken possession of his soul,—it was incense to him. Truly, Mlle. Fouchette had an artistic eye,—a most excellent judgment. It extracted the sting——

"Yes," continued Mlle. Fouchette, looking through him as if he were so much glass, "a great artist said to me the other day——"

"Pardon! but, mademoiselle, does your new beauty, —the 'sculptor's dream,' you know,—does she do the studios of the quarter?"

"No! Why should she?"

He was silent. Would she have another drink?

"Thanks! Un ballon, garçon," repeated Mlle. Fouchette.

They looked at the crowd in silence for a while.

The scene was inspiriting. With the shades of evening the joyous struggle waxed more furious. The entire street was now taken up by the merrymakers, who made the air resound with their screams and shrieks of laughter. The confetti lay three or four inches deep on the walks, where street gamins slyly scraped it into private receptacles for second use. The haze of dust hung over the broad Boulevard St. Michel like a morning fog over a swamp. Mlle. Fouchette watched the scene for a few minutes without a word. Both were thinking of something else.

"She'll soon get over it, never fear."

"I suppose so," he said, knowing that she still spoke of Madeleine, and somewhat bored at her reappearance in the conversation.

"A woman does not go on loving a man who never cares for her,—who loves another."

"'Loves another,'" he repeated, absently.

"But if Madeleine meets them just now,—oh! look out, monsieur! She's a tiger!"

He shuddered. He was unable to stand this any longer; he rose absent-mindedly and, with scant courtesy to the gossipper, incontinently fled.

"Ah! what a handsome fellow he is! Yet he is certainly a fool about women. A pig like Madeleine! But, then, all men are fools when it comes to a woman."

With this bit of philosophy Mlle. Fouchette buried her dainty nose in the last "ballon." She quenched a rising sigh by the operation. For some reason she was not quite happy. As she withdrew it her face suddenly became all animation.

"Ah!" she muttered, "I'd give my last louis now if that melon, Madeleine, could only see that."

Directly in front of her and not ten feet distant a young man and a young girl slowly forced a passage through the conflicting currents of boisterous people. The man was anywhere between twenty-five and thirty, of supple figure, serious face, and sombre eyes that lighted up reluctantly at all of this frivolity. It was only when they were turned upon the sweet young face of the girl at his side that they took on a glow of inexpressible sweetness.

"Truly!" said Mlle. Fouchette to herself, "but she is something on my style."

Which is perhaps the highest compliment one woman can pay another. It meant that her "style" was quite satisfactory,—the right thing. Yet Mlle. Fouchette really needed some fifty pounds of additional flesh to get into the same class.

If the rippling laughter, the shining azure of her eyes, the ever-changing expression of her mobile mouth, and now and then the rapt look bestowed upon her companion were indications, she certainly was a happy young woman. Her right hand rested upon his arm, her left shielded her face from the too fierce onslaughts of confetti. Neither of them took an active part in the fun. That, however, did not deter the young men from complimenting her with a continuous shower of confetti. The girl laughingly shook it out of her beautiful blonde hair.

"Allons donc! She has my hair, too!" thought Mlle. Fouchette. It is impossible not to admire ourselves in others.

With the excitement of an unaccustomed pleasure mantling her neck and cheeks the girl was certainly a pretty picture. The plain and simple costume was of the cut of the provinces rather than that of Paris, but it set off the lithe and graceful figure that needed no artificiality of the dressmaker to enforce its petite perfection.

"That must be Lerouge," thought Mlle. Fouchette. "He does look something like—no; it is imagination. He is not nearly so handsome as Monsieur Marot. But she is sweet!"

The couple were forced over against the chairs by the crowd and Mlle. Fouchette got a good look at them. The eyes of Mlle. Remy met hers,—they sought the face of her companion, and returned and rested curiously upon Mlle. Fouchette. The glance of her escort followed in the same direction. And even after they had passed he half turned again and looked back at the girl sitting alone amid the crowd under the awning.

Jean Marot had plunged into the throng to try and shake off the unpleasant suggestions of Mlle. Fouchette. While he felt instinctively the feminine malice, it was none the less bitter to his taste. It was opening a wound afresh and salting it. He felt that the idea suggested by "La Savatière" was intolerable,—impossible. He paced up and down alone in the Luxembourg gardens until retreat was sounded. Then he re-entered the boulevard by the Place de Médicis, dodged a bevy of singing grisettes in male attire, to suddenly find himself face to face with the object of his thoughts.

How beautiful, and sweet and pure and innocent she looked! The laughing eyes, the profusion of hair with its tint of gold, now sparkling with confetti, the two rows of pearls between their rich rims of red,—it surely was an angel from the skies and not a woman who stood before him! And his knees trembled with the desire to let him to the earth at her feet.

The young girl regarded him first in semi-recognition, then with blank astonishment,—as well she might. She shrank closer to her protector.

Henri Lerouge had at first looked at his former friend with a dark and scowling face; but Jean had seen only the girl, and therefore failed to note the expression of satisfaction that swiftly succeeded.

"Pardon! but, monsieur, even Mardi Gras does not excuse a boor." And Lerouge somewhat roughly elbowed him to one side.

The insult from Lerouge was nothing. Jean never thought of that. She had come, she had ignored him, she had gone,—the woman he loved!

He stood speechless for a moment, then staggered away, his self-love bleeding.

Unconsciously he had taken the direction they had gone, slowly groping his way rather than walking, next to the iron fence of the Luxembourg gardens, past the great School of Mines, along the Boulevard St. Michel towards the Observatory. Like a drunken man he stuck close to the walls, and thus crossed the obtuse angle into Rue Denfert-Rocherau. Hesitating at the tomb-like buildings that mark the entrance to the catacombs at the end of that street, he leaned against the great wrought-iron grille and tried to collect his thoughts.

He remembered now; this was where he had gone down one day to view the rows and stacks of boxes and vaults of mouldering bones. Yes, he even recalled the humorous idea of that day that there were more Parisians beneath the pavements of Paris than above them, and that they slept better o' nights.

The cold wind stirred the branches, and they grated against the fence with a dismal, sighing sound.

"Loves another!"

Was it not that which it said?

"Loves another!" in plain and well-measured cadence.

And the word "l-o-v-e-s" was long and sorrowfully drawn out, and "another" came sharply decisive.

He wandered on, aimlessly, yet in the general direction of Montrouge. Fouchette,—yes, she had told the truth. He—where was he?

The streets up here were practically deserted, the entire population, apparently, having gone to the boulevards. Here and there some rez-de-chaussée aglow showed the usual gossippers of the concierges. Now and then isolated merrymakers were returning, covered with confetti, having exhausted themselves and the pleasures of the day together.

Rue Hallé,—he remembered now, though he scarcely noted it.

All at once his heart gave a bound. His mind came down to vulgar earth. It was at the sight of a solitary woman who sped swiftly round the corner from the Avenue d'Orléans and came towards him. Her stout figure between him and the electric light cast a long shadow down the street,—the shadow of a woman in bloomer costume, with a hat perched forward at an angle of forty-five degrees.

It was Mlle. Madeleine.

What could she be doing here at this hour,—she, who lived in Rue Monge?

Before he could answer this question she was almost upon him. But she was so absorbed in her own purposes that she saw him not, merely turning to the right up the Rue Hallé with the quick and certain step

of one who knows. Her black brows were set fiercely, and beneath them the big dark eyes glittered dangerously. Her full lips were tightly compressed; in the firmness of her tread was a world of determination.

Jean had obtained a good view of her face as she crossed the street, and he shuddered. For in it he saw reflected the state of his own tempestuous soul. He had read therein his own mind distempered by love and doubt and torn by jealousy, disappointment, and despair.

He recalled the warning of Mlle. Fouchette, and he trembled for the woman he loved. Well he comprehended the French character where love and hatred are concerned.

At Rue Bezout the girl turned to the left, crossed over, and ran rather than walked towards Avenue Montsouris. Jean ran until he reached the corner, then cautiously peeped around it. Had he not done so he would have come upon her, for she had stopped within two metres and fumbled nervously with a package. He could hear her panting and murmuring in her deep voice. She tore the string from the package with her teeth and threw the paper wrapper on the ground.

It was a bottle of bluish liquid.

His heart stood still as he saw it; his legs almost failed him. If he had seen the intended victim of this diabolical design approaching at that moment he felt that he would scarcely have the strength to cry out in warning, so overwhelmed was he with the horror of it.

What should he do? Would they come this way, or

by Montsouris? He might fall upon her suddenly,—overpower her where she stood!

Jean softly peeped once more around the angle of the wall. She was trying to extract the cork from the bottle with a pair of tiny scissors, but, being half frantic with haste and passion, she had only broken one point after the other.

A sweet and silvery laugh behind him sent his heart into his throat. It was Lerouge and Mlle. Remy coming leisurely along the Rue Hallé. It was now or——

But a second glance over his shoulder showed that they had turned down the narrow Rue Dareau. Madeleine had made a mistake.

Almost at the same instant a piercing shriek of agony burst upon the night. The scream seemed to split his ears, so near was it, so deep the pain and terror of it.

And there lay the miserable woman writhing on the walk, tearing out great wisps of her dark hair in her intolerable suffering, and filling the air with heart-rending cries of distress.

CHAPTER IX

Jean Marot was not, as has been seen, an extraordinary type of his countrymen. Sensitive, sympathetic, impulsive, passionate, extreme in all things, he embodied in method and temperament the characteristics of his race.

His first impulse upon realizing what had befallen the misguided girl of Rue Monge was the impulse common to humanity. But as he flew to her succor he saw others running from various directions, attracted by her cries and moved by the same motive.

To be found there would not only be useless but dangerous,—for the girl as well as for himself. Therefore he discreetly took to his heels.

Flight at such a moment is confession of guilt. So it followed quite naturally that a comprehension of what had happened sent a considerable portion of the first-comers after the fleeing man.

"Assassin!"

"Vitrioleur!"

"Stop him!"

These are very inspiring cries with a clamorous French mob to howl them. To be caught under such circumstances is to run imminent risk of summary punishment. And the vitriol-thrower is not an uncommon feature of Parisian criminal life; there would be little hesitation where one is caught, as it were, red-handed.

Jean ran these possibilities through his mind as he dashed down a side street into the Avenue Montsouris. Fear did not exactly lend him wings, but it certainly

did not retard his flight. And he had the additional advantage that he was not yelling at every jump and lost no time in false direction. He doubled by way of Rue Dareau, cut into Rue de la Tombe-Issoire over the net-work of railway tracks, and then dropped into a walk. But not so soon that he escaped the observation of a police agent standing in the shadow in the next narrow turning towards the railway station. The officer heard his panting breath long before Jean got near him, and rightly conjectured that the student was running away from something. To detain him for an explanation was an obvious duty.

"Well, now! Monsieur seems to be in a hurry," said he, as he suddenly stepped in front of the fugitive.

This official apparition would have startled even a man who was not in a hurry, but Jean quickly recovered his self-possession.

"Yes, monsieur; I go for a doctor. A sick——"

"Pardon! but you have just passed the hospital. That won't do, young man!"

The agent made a gesture to seize his suspect, but at that moment Jean saw two other agents in the distance walking rapidly to join their comrade. He upper-cut the man sharply, catching him squarely on the point of the chin and sending him to grass with a mangled and bleeding tongue.

There appeared to be no help for it, but the young man now had two fresh pursuers. At any rate, he was free. It would be to his shame, he thought, if he could not distance two men in heavy cowhide boots, encumbered with cloaks and sabres. So he started down the

Rue de la Tombe-Issoire with a lead of some two hundred yards. He saw lights and a crowd and heard music in the Place St. Jacques, and knew that he was saved.

The Place St. Jacques was en fête. A band-stand occupied the spot long sacred to the guillotine, up to its last removal to La Roquette. The immediate neighborhood of Place St. Jacques would have preferred the guillotine and an occasional execution as a holiday enjoyment, but next to witnessing the sanguinary operation of the "national razor," a dance was the popular idea of amusement. And the Parisian populace must be amused. The government considers that a part of its duty, and encourages the "bal du carrefour" by the erection of stands and providing music at the general expense. It was the saturnine humor of Place St. Jacques to dance where men lost their heads. However, it would be difficult to find a street crossing in Paris big enough to dance in that had not been through the centuries soaked with human blood.

It was a little fresher in Place St. Jacques, that was all.

The band-stand being on the exact place marked in the stone pavement for the guillotine, it gave a sort of peculiar piquancy to the occasion. While the proprietors of the adjacent wine-shops and "zincs" grumbled at the new order of things, the young people were making the best of Mardi Gras in hilarious fashion.

Though Place St. Jacques presented a lively scene beneath its scattered lights, it was one common enough to Jean Marot, who now only saw in the romping crowd and spectators the means of shaking off his

police pursuers. Among the hundred dancers he made his way to the most compact body of lookers-on, where the indications were that something unusually interesting was in progress. Here the blown condition of a student would not be noticed.

Yells of delight from those in his immediate vicinity awoke his curiosity to see what was the particular attraction. At the end of the figure this expression grew enthusiastic.

"Bravo! bravo!" came in chorus.

"Très bien! très bien!"

"It is well done, that!"

"Yes,—it is the Savatière!"

Jean was startled for the instant, since it brought vividly back to him the beginning of his bitter day.

So it was Mlle. Fouchette.

She made, with another girl of her set, a part of a quadrille, and the pair were showing off the agile accomplishments of the semi-professionals of the Bullier and Moulin Rouge. These consisted of kicking off the nearest hats, doing the split, the guitar act, the pointed arch, and similar fantasies. Having forced his way in, Jean was instantly recognized by Mlle. Fouchette, who shook the confetti out of her blonde hair at every pose. Then, as she executed a pigeon-wing on his corner, she whispered,—

"Hold, Monsieur Jean,—wait one moment!"

"Will monsieur be good enough to take my place for the last figure?"

Her partner, a thin, serious-looking young man, had approached Jean hat in hand and addressed him with courtly politeness.

Jean protested with equal politeness,—yet the offer served his turn admirably,—no! no!—and the mademoiselle, monsieur?

"Come, then!" cried that damsel, as the last figure began, and she seized Jean by the arm and half swung him into position.

The polite monsieur immediately disappeared in the crowd.

The French are born dancers. There are young Frenchmen here who would be the admiration of the ballet-master. Frenchmen dance for the pure love of motion. They prefer an agile partner of the softer sex, but it is not essential,—they will dance with each other, or even alone, and on the pavements of Paris as well as on the waxed floor of a ball-room.

Jean Marot was, like many students of the Quartier Latin, not only a lover of Terpsichore, but proficient in the art of using his legs for something more agreeable than running. There were difficult steps and acrobatic feats introduced by Mlle. Fouchette which he could execute quite as easily and gracefully. And thus it happened that the young man who three minutes before had been fleeing the police was now swept away into the general frivolity of Place St. Jacques. In fact, he had already absolutely forgotten that he had come there a fugitive.

Mlle. Fouchette had just joyously challenged him to make the "arc aux pieds" with her,—which is to pose foot against foot in midair while the other dancers pass beneath,—when Jean noticed a keen-eyed police agent looking at him attentively.

"Look out!" exclaimed Mlle. Fouchette, impatiently,

SHE SEIZED JEAN BY THE ARM

and up went his foot against the neat little boot, and the other six passed merrily beneath.

When he had finished the figure there were three agents, who whispered together earnestly; but they made no effort to molest him. His alibi stood.

Nevertheless the police agents openly followed the couple as they walked down the Rue St. Jacques. He saw there was no attempt at concealment.

"How, then, monsieur!" cried the girl, banteringly; "still thinking of Madeleine?"

Jean shivered. Poor Madeleine!

"What a fool a girl is to run after a man who doesn't care for her!"

"And when a man runs after a girl who doesn't care for him?" he asked, half seriously.

"Oh, then he's worse than a fool woman,—he's a man, monsieur."

They reached her neighborhood.

"Come up, monsieur, will you? It is but a poor hospitality I can offer, but an easy-chair and a pipe are the same everywhere, n'est-ce pas?"

"Good!" said he. "I'll accept it with all my heart, mademoiselle."

Jean had again noted the police agents, and he mentally concluded to let them wait a bit. Besides, he was very tired.

When Mlle. Fouchette had arranged her shaded lamp, drawn up the easy-chair and settled the young man in it, she flung her hat on the bed and bustled about to get some supper. She pulled out a small round oil-stove and proceeded to light the burners. He looked at her inquiringly.

"It is Poupon," said she.

"Oh! it's Poupon, is it?"

"Yes. It's a darling, isn't she?"

"It—she—is."

"You see, when I want a cup of tea, there!"

She removed the ornamental top with a flourish. Under it was a single griddle. Mlle. Fouchette regarded the domestic machine with great complacency, her blonde head prettily cocked on one side.

"It certainly is convenient," said Jean, feeling that some comment was demanded of him.

"When I cook I put it in the chimney."

"But you have other fire in winter?"

"Fire? Never! Wood is too dear,—and then, really, one goes to the cafés every night, and to the studios every day. They roast one at the studios, because of the models."

"Oh!"

"Yes, monsieur," she went on. "Now, Poupon is most generally a warm-hearted little thing, and then one can go to bed, in a pinch. And I can have tea, or coffee, or hot wine. Do you like hot wine, monsieur? With a bit of lemon it is very good. And look here," she continued rapidly, without giving him time to say anything, "it is quite snug and comfortable, is it not?"

She had thrown open a door next to the mantel and proudly exploited a cupboard containing various bits of china and glassware. The cupboard was in the wall and closed flush with the latter, the door being covered with the same paper. There were a few cooking utensils below.

"Yes, to be sure, mademoiselle, it is all very nice indeed," said he, "but—but have you got a bit to eat anywhere about the place?"

"Oh, pardon, monsieur! Oh, yes! Have we anything to eat, Poupon? Monsieur shall see."

She pinned up her skirt in a business-like manner, grabbed the little oil-stove, and placed it in the fireplace.

Jean watched her mechanically without thinking of her. He heard her without comprehending clearly what she said. And yet, somehow, he seemed to lean upon her as something tangible, something to keep his mind from sinking into its recent despondency.

"Tiens! but, mademoiselle," he cried, starting up all at once, "you are not going to try to cook on that thing!"

"What? Hear him, then, Poupon, chérie! To be called 'that thing!' Oh!"

Mlle. Fouchette affected great indignation on the part of herself and domestic friend,—the worst that could be said of which friend was that it emitted a bad odor of a Pennsylvania product,—but it did not interfere with her act of successfully rolling a promising omelette. She had already prettily arranged the table for two, on which were temptingly displayed a litre of Bordeaux, a loaf of bread, and a dish of olives.

"But——"

"Now, don't say a word, monsieur, or I'll drop something."

"You need not have cooked anything," he protested. "A bit of bread and wine would have——"

"Poor Poupon! So monsieur thinks you are pas

bon! Perhaps monsieur thinks you and I don't eat up here, eh? Non? Monsieur is in love——"

"Mademoiselle!"

"Oh, I talk to Poupon, whom you despise,—and—now, the omelette, monsieur. Let me help you."

They had drawn chairs to the table, and the girl poured two glasses of wine. She watched him drain his glass and then refilled it, finally observing, with a smile,—

"It can't be Madeleine——"

"Oh! to the devil with——" but he checked himself by the sudden recollection of the terrible misfortune that had overtaken Madeleine.

Mlle. Fouchette shrugged her shoulders, but she lost no point of his confusion.

"Is it necessary, then," he asked, cynically, "that I should be in love with some one?" He laughed, but his merriment did not deceive her.

"Ah! Anybody can see, monsieur, you love or you hate—one."

"Both, perhaps," he suggested. "For instance, I love your omelette and I hate your questions."

"You hate Monsieur Lerouge, therefore you love where he is concerned."

He was silent. It was evident that he did not care to discuss his private affairs with Mlle. Fouchette.

The girl was quick to see this and changed the conversation to politics. But Jean had no mind for this either. He began to grow impatient, when she opened a box on the mantel and showed him an assortment of pipes.

"Oho! You keep a petit tabac?"

"One has some friends, monsieur."

"A good many, I should judge,—each of whom leaves a pipe, indicating an early and regular return."

"I don't find yours here yet, monsieur," she replied, demurely.

"But you will," said he. "And I'll come up and smoke it occasionally, if you'll let me."

"With pleasure, monsieur, even if you had not saved my life——"

"There! Stop that, now. Let us never speak of that, mademoiselle. You got me into a scrape and got me out again, so we are quits."

"But——"

"Say no more about it, mademoiselle."

"I may *think* about it, I suppose," she suggested, with affected satire.

"There,—tell me about the pipes."

"Oh, yes. Well, you know how men hate to part with old pipes? And they are, therefore, my valuable presents, monsieur."

"Truly! I never thought of that."

"No?"

"And the pictures?"

"Scraps from the studios."

He got up and examined the sketches on the walls. They were from pen, pencil, and brush, from as many artists,—some quite good and showing more or less budding genius. He paused some time before the head of his entertainer.

"It is very good,—admirable!" he said.

"You think so, monsieur?"

"It is worth all the rest together, mademoiselle."

"So much? You are an artist, Monsieur Jean?"

"Amateur,—strictly amateur,—yet I know something of pictures. Now, I should say that bit is worth, say, one hundred francs."

"Nonsense! The work of five minutes of—amusement; yes, making fun of me one day. Do you suppose he would give me one hundred francs?"

"The highest effects in art are often merest accident, or the result of the spirit of the moment,—some call it inspiration."

"But if you didn't know who did it, monsieur——"

"It is not signed."

"N-no; but, monsieur, every one must know his work."

"Yes, and every one knows that some of it is bad."

"Oh!"

"And this is——"

"Bad too, monsieur," she laughingly interrupted. "When any one offers me fifty francs for that thing, Monsieur Jean, it goes!"

"Then it is mine," said Jean.

"No! You joke, monsieur," she protested, turning away.

"Not at all," said he, tendering her a fresh, crisp billet de banque for fifty francs. "Voilà! Is that a joke?"

Mlle. Fouchette colored slightly and drew back.

"Monsieur likes the picture?"

"Why, certainly. If I didn't——"

"Then it is yours, monsieur, if you will deign to accept it as a—present——"

"No, no!"

"As a souvenir, monsieur."

"Nonsense! I will not do it," he declared. "Come, mademoiselle, you are trying to back out of your offer of a minute ago. Here! Is it mine or is it not? Say!"

"It is yours, monsieur, in any case," she said, in a low voice, "though you would have done me a favor not to press me with money. Besides, 'La Petite Chatte' is not worth it."

"I differ with you, mademoiselle; I simply get a picture cheap."

Which was true. There was no sentiment in his offer, and she saw it as she carefully folded the bank-note and put it away with a sigh. It was a great deal of money for her, but still——

There was a great noise at the iron knocker below. This had been repeated for the third time.

"My friends below are growing impatient," he thought.

Jean had that inborn hatred of authority so common to many of his countrymen. It often begins in baiting the police, and sometimes ends in the overthrow of the government.

"Whoever that is," observed the girl, "he will never get in,—never!"

"Good!" said Jean.

"He won't get in," she repeated, listening. "Monsieur Benoit will never let anybody in who makes a racket like that."

"Not even the police?"

"No,—he will not hear them."

"Oh! ho! ho! ho!" roared Jean; "not hear that!"

"I mean he would affect not to know that it was the police."

She went to a window and listened at the shutter. Then, returning to her guest, who was placidly smoking,—

"It is the police, sure."

"I knew it."

"Now, what do you suppose the agents want at this hour?" It was one o'clock by the little bronze timepiece on the mantel.

"Me," said Jean.

"You!" She glanced at him with a smile of incredulity.

"Yes, petite."

He puffed continuous rings towards the ceiling, wondering whether he had better explain.

Presently came a tap at the door. The girl hastened to answer it, while Jean refilled his pipe thoughtfully. When she came back she was more excited. She whispered,—

"Monsieur Benoit, le concierge, he wants to see you, —he must let them in!"

"Well, let them in!" exclaimed the young man.

He had thought of Madeleine, chiefly, and the effect of his arrest upon her. A hearing must inevitably lead to her exposure, if not to his. But it was useless to endeavor to escape. He felt that he was trapped. Being in that fix, he may as well face the music.

"But he wants to see you personally," said the girl.

Jean went to the door, where the saturnine Benoit stood with his flaring candle. The man cautiously closed the inner vestibule door.

"S-sh! It is a souricière, monsieur, as I suspected when you came in with that little she-devil! The agents were at your heels. Now, Monsieur Lerouge, do you wish to escape or do you——"

"I intend to remain right here. There is no reason that I should become a fugitive."

"As you please, monsieur," replied the concierge, with an expressive shrug. And the clack of his sabots was soon heard on the stone stair.

"Funny," said Jean, re-entering, "but he takes me for Lerouge. There is some sort of understanding between them. He would have aided me to escape."

"And why not have accepted, monsieur?" asked Mlle. Fouchette.

"I would rather be a prisoner as Jean Marot than escape as Henri Lerouge," replied the young man.

"Anyhow," muttered the girl, "perhaps the police have made the same mistake."

"I'm afraid not," said Jean.

Mlle. Fouchette regarded the young man admiringly from the corner of her eye. He was so calm and resolute. He had resumed the easy-chair and pipe.

Mlle. Fouchette was not able to veil her feelings under this cloak of indifference. Her highly nervous organization was sensibly disturbed. One might have easily presumed that she was in question instead of Jean Marot. She had hastily cleared the little table and replaced the lamp, when her unwelcome visitors announced themselves. Mlle. Fouchette promptly confronted them at the door.

"Well, gentlemen?"

"Mademoiselle, pardon. I'm sorry to disturb you, but I am after the body of one M. Lerouge."

"Then why don't you go and get him?" snapped the girl.

"Pardieu! that is precisely why we are here, mon enfant. He——"

"He is not here."

"Come, now, that will not do, mademoiselle. At least he was here a few moments ago.—Where is that dolt Benoit?"

"M. Lerouge is not here, I tell you; never was here in his life!"

"Oh!"

It was M. Benoit, the concierge. His astonishment was undoubtedly genuine; possibly as much at her brazen denial as at his own error in believing her a police decoy.

"Mademoiselle ought to know," he added, in reply to official inquiry.

"Let us see," exclaimed the man, thrusting the girl aside and entering the room. He was followed by two of his men and the concierge. A rear-guard had detained a curious assortment of half-dressed people on the stairs.

The eyes of the agents fell upon the young man with a pipe simultaneously. Monsieur Benoit saw him also, and flashed an indignant look at the girl. He had concluded that she had found means to conceal her visitor.

"Ah! Monsieur Lerouge," began the sous-brigadier.

"Bah! you fools!" sneered Mlle. Fouchette, "can't you see that it is not Monsieur Lerouge?"

"There! no more lies, mademoiselle. Your name, monsieur?"

"Jean Marot."

"Oh! so it is Jean Marot?" said the officer, mockingly, while he glanced alternately at Mlle. Fouchette, at M. Benoit, and at his men. "Very well,—I'll take you as Jean Marot, then," he angrily added.

"Nevertheless," said Jean, now amused at police expense, "I am not Lerouge. There is said to be some resemblance between us, that is all."

The face of M. Benoit was that of a positive man suddenly overwhelmed with evidence of his own stupidity. Mlle. Fouchette laughed outright. The sous-brigadier frowned. One of his men spoke up,—

"Oho! now I see——"

"Dubat, shut up!"

"But, mon brigadier," persisted the man designated, "it is not the man we took that night at Le Petit Rouge,—non!"

"Ah! là, là, là!" put in Mlle. Fouchette, growing tired of this. "I know M. Lerouge and M. Marot equally well, monsieur, and this is Marot. He has been with me all the evening. We danced in the Place St. Jacques and came directly here; before that we were at the Café du Panthéon. He has not left here. And they do look alike, monsieur; so it is said."

"That is very true," muttered the concierge,—"and I have made the mistake too; though, to be sure, I know M. Lerouge but slightly and had never seen this man before, to my knowledge."

Meanwhile, the girl had made a sign to the sous-

brigadier that at once attracted that consequential man's attention.

"Then, mademoiselle," he concluded, after a moment's thought, "you can give us the address of this Monsieur Lerouge?"

"Oh, yes. It is Montrouge, 7 Rue Dareau,—en quatrième."

M. Benoit gave the girl informer a vicious look, which had as much effect upon her as water might have on a duck's back.

Jean did not require a note-book and pencil to fix this street and number in his own mind. He turned to the sous-brigadier as the latter rose to take his departure,—

"Pardon, monsieur; may I ask what charge is made against Monsieur Lerouge that you thus hunt him down in the middle of the night?"

"It is very serious, monsieur," replied the man, respectful enough now; "a young woman has been blinded with vitriol."

"Horrible!" exclaimed Mlle. Fouchette. "I don't believe Lerouge could have ever done that! No, never!"

"Nor I," said Jean.

The police officer merely raised his eyebrows slightly and observed,—

"It was in the Rue Dareau, monsieur."

"And the woman? Do they know——"

"One named Madeleine, mademoiselle."

"Madeleine!" cried the girl, with a white face. "Madeleine! Mon Dieu! You hear that, Monsieur Jean? It was Madeleine!"

"Courage, mademoiselle; Lerouge never did that," said Jean, calmly. "It is a mistake. He could not do that."

"Never! It is impossible!"

Mlle. Fouchette wrung her hands and sought his eyes in vain for some explanation. She seemed overcome with terror.

"Parbleu!" exclaimed the police officer, in taking his leave. "Mademoiselle, there is nothing impossible in Paris."

CHAPTER X

The first instinct of Jean Marot had been to kill Henri Lerouge.

Revenge is the natural heritage of his race. Revenge is taught as a sacred duty in the common schools of France. Revenge keeps the fires aglow under the boilers of French patriotism. Revenge is the first thought to follow on the heels of private insult or personal injury.

It had been that of the ignorant human animal called Madeleine. How the horrible design of Madeleine had chilled his blood! He was sorry for the unhappy girl with a natural sympathy; yet he would have torn her to pieces had she successfully carried her scheme of revenge into execution.

Jean took to haunting Montrouge day and night, invariably passing down Rue Dareau and contemplating No. 7, keeping his eye on the porte-cochère and the fourth floor, as if she might be passing in or out, or show herself at a lighted window. But he never saw her,—never saw Lerouge. He never seemed to expect to see them.

He had ceased to attend classes. What were books and classes to him now? He took more absinthe than was good for him.

His father's friend, Dr. Cardiac, visited him, remonstrated with him, readily diagnosed his case, then wrote to Monsieur Marot the elder. The result of this was a peremptory call home. To this summons Jean as promptly replied. He refused to go. An equally prompt response told him he had no home,—no father,

—and that thenceforth he must shift for himself,—that he had received his last franc.

Ten days later he unexpectedly encountered Mlle. Fouchette on Boulevard St. Michel. It was Saturday evening, and all the student world was abroad. But perhaps of that world none was more miserable than Jean Marot.

"Ah! Then it is really you, monsieur?" There was a perceptible coldness in her greeting. However, his condition was apparent. The sharp blue eyes had taken his measure at a glance. She interrupted his polite reply.

"Là! là! là! Then you are in trouble. You young men are always in trouble. When it isn't one thing it is another."

"It is both this time, I'm afraid," he said, smiling at the heavy philosophy from such a light source.

They crossed over and walked along the wall of the ancient College d'Harcourt, where there were fewer people. The dark circles under his handsome eyes seemed to soften her still further.

"I am sorry for you, monsieur."

"Thank you, mademoiselle."

"And poor Madeleine——"

"You have seen her, then?"

"Oh, of course!"

"Of course," he repeated.

"But, monsieur, you may not know that you were suspected of——"

"Go on," seeing her hesitation. "Of having something to do with it?"

"Precisely."

"I knew that."

To avoid the crowd and curious comment, Jean turned into the Luxembourg garden.

"Well," he resumed, "you said I was suspected first by the police, then——"

"By me," she said, promptly.

"By you!"

"Yes, monsieur."

"And what, my dear mademoiselle, had I done to merit so distinguished an honor?"

"Dear me! monsieur, it was chiefly what you hadn't done; and then the circumstantial evidence, you must confess, was strong."

"I realized that, also that in France it is not easy to get out of prison, once in it, innocent or guilty."

"So you kept out. Very wisely, monsieur. But you know the papers next morning spoke of Madeleine's lover, and talked of the lost clue of the Place St. Jacques, where we met."

"It certainly would have been suspicious under some circumstances," he admitted. "Now, if I had been her lover, for instance——"

"There! I went to the hospital. And don't you know, she would not betray the man who did it, though she suffered horribly. She will lose one of her eyes, poor girl!"

"Great heavens! What a misfortune!"

"Yes!"

"And she would not betray her assailant?"

"Not a word!" exclaimed Mlle. Fouchette. "I never believed Madeleine could rise to that."

"Nor I," said Jean.

"And the police did worry that Lerouge," continued the girl.

"Oh, they did?"

"Yes; but he easily proved that he was not only not Madeleine's lover, but that he was out somewhere with his—his——"

"Mistress, eh?" he said, bitterly. "Why not say it?"

"With his friend," she added, her eyes on the ground.

"Ugh!"

"But you, monsieur,—you have not yet told me your troubles. Your love goes badly, I suppose, eh?"

"Always."

"It is the same old thing. I wonder how it is to be loved thus. Very nice, no doubt."

"And has no one ever loved you, mademoiselle?" he asked.

"Non!"

"You astonish me! And the world is so full of lovers, too."

"I mean no man."

"Are you sure?"

"Very sure, monsieur. Could one be loved like that and not know it?"

"That is what I ask myself every day." He said this to himself rather than to his wondering companion.

"Why, monsieur!——"

"But there are other things just now,—to-day," he said, abruptly changing the subject; "and the worst thing——"

"The worst thing is money," she interrupted. "I

have had 'the worst thing.' It happens every now and then. You need not hesitate."

"Worse yet," he continued, smiling in spite of himself at her conclusion.

"I can tell it in advance. It is the old story. Your love is not reciprocated,—you neglect your classes,—you fail in the exams,—you take to absinthe. Ah, çà!"

"Still worse, mon enfant."

"Ah! You play——"

"No. I never play. You are wrong only that once, mademoiselle."

He told her the truth. And she listened with the sage air of one who knows all about it and was ready with her decision.

"Monsieur Marot,"—she paused a second,—"you think I'm a bad girl——"

"Oh, don't be too sure of that. I——"

"Ah, çà!" impatiently waving his politeness aside; "but I owe you much, and I would do you a service if possible."

"I thank you, mademoiselle."

"You think it impossible? Perhaps. I am nothing. I am only a poor little woman, monsieur,—alone in the world. But I know this world,—I have wrestled with it. I have had hard falls,—I got up again. Therefore my experience has been bitter; but still it is experience."

"Sad experience, doubtless."

"Yes; and it ought to have taught me something, even if I were the most stupid and vicious, eh?"

"Surely," he said.

"And my counsel ought to have some value in your eyes?"

"Why, yes; certainly, mademoiselle."

"At least it is disinterested——"

"Sure!"

"Go home!"

"But——"

She interrupted him sharply, nervously grasping his passive hand.

"Go home, Monsieur Jean,—at once!"

She trembled, and her voice grew low and softly sweet, and almost pleading.

"Go home, Monsieur Jean! Leave all of this behind,—it is ruin!"

"Never! I cannot do that, mademoiselle. Besides, it is too late,—it is impossible! I have no home, now. Never!"

"There!"

Mlle. Fouchette rose abruptly, shrugging her narrow shoulders with the air of having done what she could and washing her hands of the consequences. Her smile of half pity, half contempt, for the weakness of a strong man clearly indicated that she had expected nothing and was not disappointed. As he still remained absorbed in his own miserable thoughts, she returned to the attack in a lively manner.

"So that is out of the way," she said. "Now let us see what you are going to do. You probably have friends?"

"A few."

"Do not trust to friends, monsieur; it will spare you the humiliation of finding them out. What are your resources?"

"I have none," he replied.

"How much money have you?"

"Nothing!"

"Ah, monsieur,"—she now sat down again, visibly softened,—"if you will come and dine with me and petite Poupon we can talk it all over at leisure, n'est-ce pas? I can make a bien joli pot-au-feu for a franc,—which means soup, meat, and vegetables; and I know a petite marchande de vins where one can get a litre of Bordeaux for cinquante, which, with a salade at two sous and cheese for two more, will round out a very good dinner for two. Ah! le voilà!"

She wound up her rapid summary of culinary delights with the charming eagerness of a child, bringing forth from the folds of her dress a small purse, through the netting of which glistened some silver coin, and causing it to chink triumphantly.

Jean Marot, suddenly lifted out of himself by this impulsive good-nature, was at first embarrassed, then stupefied. He was unable to utter a word. He was ashamed of his own weakness; he was overwhelmed by the sense of her impetuous good-will and practical human sympathy. He silently pressed the thin hand which had unconsciously crept into his.

"No, it is nothing," she said, lightly, withdrawing her hand. "I have plenty to-day,—you will have it some other day; and then you can give me a petit souper, monsieur, n'est-ce pas?"

"Very well. On that condition I will accept your invitation, mademoiselle. We will dine with petite Poupon."

He had not the heart to tell her that his "nothing" meant a few hundred francs to his credit and a few

louis in his pocket at that moment,—more than she had ever possessed at any one time in her life.

As it was, she walked along by his side with that feeling of camaraderie experienced by those in the same run of luck as to the world's goods, and with that buoyancy of spirit which attends a good action. The few francs and odd sous in the little purse were abundant for to-day,—the morrow could take care of itself.

They turned up the narrow Rue Royer-Collard, where she stopped for the litre of Bordeaux, responding gayly to the wayside queries and comments. Reaching the Rue St. Jacques, there were the salad and the cheese to add to the necessary part of the French meal; and the bit of beef and the inevitable onions brought up the rear of purchases.

"I have some potatoes and carrots," she said, reflectively,—"so much saved. Let us see. It is not so bad,—quatre-vingt-cinq, dix, cinquante,—un franc quarante-cinq."

She made the calculation as they went up the worn stairway after the passage of the tunnel.

"Not half bad," said he, compelled to admire her cleverness.

Reaching her chamber, she deposited the entire evening investment on the hearth, proceeding to the preliminary features of preparation. She threw her hat on the bed, then pulled off the light bolero and sent it after the hat, and then she began slipping out of her skirt by suddenly letting it fall in a ring about her feet.

"Oh!" said Jean.

"Excuse me, will you? I can't risk my pretty skirt for appearances. You won't mind, monsieur? Non!"

"That's right," he said,—"a skirt is only a skirt."

He watched her with a half-amused expression as she flitted nervously about, more doll-like than ever she was, in the short yellow silken petticoat with its terminating ruffles, or cheap lace balayeuse, her blonde hair loosely drooping over her ears and caught up behind in the prevailing fashion of the quarter. She kept up a continual chatter as she opened drawers, prepared the potatoes, and arranged the little table.

Poupon was already singing in the chimney-place. Her conversation, by habit, was mostly directed to her little oil-stove, as if it were a sentient thing, something to be encouraged by flattery and restrained by reproach. It was the camaraderie of loneliness.

But to Jean, who was quick to fall back into his own reveries, her voice died away into incomprehensible jargon. Once he glanced at the sketch still on the wall and thought of her purring over her work like a satisfied cat, then the next instant again forgot her. Now and then she bestowed a keen glance on him or a passing word, but left him no time to answer or to formulate any distinct idea as to what it was about. Suddenly she pounced upon him with,—

"Monsieur Marot?'"

"Well?"

"You still live——"

"Faubourg St. Honoré."

"Mon Dieu! How foolish!"

"Yes,—now," he admitted.

"You must change. What rent do you pay?"

"Fourteen hundred——"

"Dame! And the lease?"

"Two years yet to run," said he.

"Peste! What a bother!"

"But the rent is paid."

"Oh, very well. It can be sold. And the furniture?"

"Mine."

"Good! How much?"

"It cost about three thousand francs."

"It's a fortune, monsieur," she exclaimed, with sparkling eyes. "And here I thought you were—purée!"

"Broke?"

"Yes,—that you had nothing."

"It is not much to me, who——"

"No; I understand that. I once read of a rich American who committed suicide because he was suddenly reduced to two hundred and fifty thousand francs. That was very drôle, was it not?"

"To most people, yes; but it would not be funny for one who had been accustomed to twice or five times that much every year."

"No,—I forgot," she said, reflectively, "about your affairs, monsieur. It is very simple."

"Is it?" He laughed lugubriously.

"You simply accept conditions. You give up your present mode of living; you sell your lease and furniture; you take a small place here somewhere, get only what is necessary, then find something to do. Why, you will be independent,—rich!"

"Only, you omit one thing in the calculation, mademoiselle."

She divined at once what that was.

"One must arrange for the stomach before talking about love. And how, then, is a young man to provide for a girl when he can't provide for himself? Let the girl alone until you begin to see the way. Don't be ridiculous, Monsieur Jean. No woman can love a man who is ridiculous. Jamais!"

Love is not exactly a synonyme for Reason. To be in love is in a measure to part company with the power of ratiocination. Nevertheless, Jean saw in an absent-minded way that Mlle. Fouchette, for whom he had never entertained even that casual respect accorded by the Anglo-Saxon to womanhood in general, spoke the words of sense and soberness. His intolerant nature, that would never have brooked such freedom from a friend, allowed everything from one who was too insignificant to excite resentment or even reply. In the same fashion Jean was touched by the exhibition of human interest and womanly sympathy in this waif of civilization. And he was of too gentle a heart not to meet it with a show of appreciation. It gave her pleasure and did not hurt him. The fact that she was probably abandoned and vicious in no wise lessened this consideration,—possibly increased his confidence in her disinterested counsel.

In Paris one elbows this species every day,—in the Quartier Latin young Frenchmen come in contact with it every night,—and without that sense of self-abasement or disgust evoked by similar association in the United States. The line of demarcation that separates

respectability from shame is not rigidly drawn in Paris; in the Quartier Latin, where the youth of France and, to a considerable extent, of the whole world are prepared for earth and heaven, it cannot be said to be drawn at all.

By his misfortunes Jean Marot had unexpectedly fallen within her reach. With her natural spirit of domination she had at once appropriated the position of mentor and manager. The precocious worldliness of her mentality amused while it sometimes astonished him. This comparatively ignorant girl of eighteen had no hesitation in guiding the man of more mature years, and succeeded through her naïveté rather than by force of character. The weakest of women can dominate the strongest of men.

"Doctors never prescribe for themselves," she said, by way of justifying her interest in him. "Is it not so, Monsieur Jean?"

"No; but they call in somebody of their own profession," he replied.

"Not if he had the same disease, surely!" she retorted.

"So you think love a disease?" he laughingly asked.

"Virulent, but not catching," said she, helping him to some soup.

There were no soup-plates and she had dipped it from the pot with a teacup and served it in a bowl; but the soup was just as good and was rich with vegetable nutrition. He showed his appreciation by a vigorous onslaught.

"And if it were a disease and catching?" he remarked presently.

"Then you would not be here," she replied. "You see, I'd run too much risk. As it is—have some more wine?—But who understands love better than a woman, monsieur?"

"Oh, I surrender, mademoiselle,—that is, provided she has loved and loves no longer."

"Been sick and been cured, eh?" she suggested. "But that is more than you require of the medical profession."

"True——"

He paused and listened. She turned her head at the same moment. There were two distinct raps on the wall. He had heard, vaguely, the sound of persons coming and going next door; had distinguished voices in the next flat. There was nothing strange about that. But the knock was the knock of design and at once arrested his attention.

The young girl started to her feet, her finger on her lips.

"He wants me," she said.

"That is evident, whoever 'he' may be," replied Jean, significantly.

"Oh, it is only Monsieur de Beauchamp. A sitting, perhaps," she added.

She slipped out of the room without deeming it necessary to resume her overskirt. The feminine inhabitants of Rue St. Jacques were so extremely unconventional,—they not infrequently went down into the street for rolls and other articles attired in this charming negligée of the bedroom boudoir. And would, perhaps, have extended this unconventionality to the neighboring cafés, only the proprietaires had

to draw a line somewhere, and had unanimously drawn it at hats and skirts, or full street dress.

Jean began to think himself entirely deserted, when Mlle. Fouchette burst rather than walked into the room conducting her next-door neighbor.

Jean saw before him a man scarcely older than himself, rather spare of figure and pale of face, in the garb of a provincial and with an air of the Jesuit enthusiast rather than the student of art. His long, dark hair was thick and bushy and worn trimmed straight around the neck after the fashion of Jeanne d'Arc's time. It completely hid his ears and fell in sprays over his temples. His face was the typical Christ of the old masters, the effect being heightened by the soft, fine, virgin beard and moustache of somewhat fairer color, and by the melancholy eyes, dark and luminous, with their curled and drooping lashes. These eyes gave rather a suggestion of sadness and inward suffering, but when animated seemed to glow with the smouldering fire of centuries.

"Pardon, Monsieur de Beauchamp," said Jean, upon being introduced to him, "but mademoiselle appears to have forgotten me for art."

"Ah! and as if there were no art in making a salad!" exclaimed the painter, as he shook hands with the other.

"Oh! là, là, là!" cried Mlle. Fouchette, wresting the dish from Jean's grasp; "there would be precious little art in this if you made it!" And she proceeded with the salad on her own account, using the two bowls that had but recently served them for soup.

Monsieur de Beauchamp and Jean discussed the

student "manifestations" planned for the next day. The Dreyfusardes—a term by which all who differed from the military régime were known—had announced a public meeting, and a counter-demonstration had been called to not only prevent that meeting but to publicly chastise such as dared to take part in it.

No attempt was made to conceal these patriotic intentions from the police. The walls blazed with flaming revolutionary posters. The portrait of the Duc d'Orléans appeared over specious promises in case of Restoration. The Royal Claimant was said to be concealed in Paris. At any rate, his agents were busy. They were in league with the Bonapartists, the Socialists, the Anti-Semites, against the things that were, and called the combination Nationalists. They were really Opportunists. The republic overthrown, they agreed to fight out their rival claims to power between themselves.

The unfortunate Jew merely served them as a weapon. They were the real traitors to their country. With the most fulsome adulation and the Jew they courted the army and sought to lead it against the republic.

And the republic,—poor, weak, headless combination of inconsistencies,—through a tricky and vacillating Ministry and a bitter, factional Parliament, greatly encouraged the idea of any sort of a change.

Popular intolerance had, after a farcical civil trial overawed by military authority, driven the foremost writer of France into exile, as it had Voltaire and Rousseau and many thousands of the best blood of the French before him.

The many noble monuments of the Paris carrefours, representing the élite of France, the heroes, the apostles of letters and liberty, who were murdered, exiled, denied Christian burial or dragged through the streets after death by Frenchmen, stand morally united in one grand monumental fane commemorative of French intolerance.

Wherever is reared a monument to French personal worth, there also is a mute testimonial of collective French infamy.

"Dans la rue!" was now the battle-cry.

All of these student "manifestations" were seized upon by the worst elements of Paris. The estimable character of these elements found in the Place Maubert and vicinity may be surmised from the fact that a few days previous to the event about to be herein recorded twenty men of the neighborhood were chosen to maintain its superiority to the Halles Centrales against a like number selected by the latter.

The contending factions were drawn up in order of battle in Place Maubert, on Boulevard St. Germain, in broad afternoon, each man being armed with a knife, and precipitated an engagement that required one hundred police reserves to quell.

"If we could only keep that pestiferous gang out of our manifestations," said Jean now to Monsieur de Beauchamp,—"they disgrace us always!"

"Oh, but they are good fighters; and there is to be fighting pretty soon," observed the artist.

"Vive l'armée!" cried Mlle. Fouchette, flourishing a salad-spoon. Mlle. Fouchette had a martial spirit.

"Whenever a student is arrested he turns out to be

one of the roughs of Place Maubert or a hoodlum of Rue Monge, or a cutthroat of Rue Mouffetard. It is disgraceful!"

"But it shows the discretion of our police, Monsieur Marot," said the artist, with his sweet smile. "You see the police are with us. We must not be too particular who fights on our side, my friend. We can't afford to quarrel with anybody just now going in our direction. They are but means to an end, let us remember, and that end the ancient prestige and glory of France."

"À bas les Juifs!" exclaimed Mlle. Fouchette, without looking up.

The godlike face of the painter glowed with the enthusiasm that consumed his soul. He now turned his grand eyes upon the girl with inexpressible sadness.

"That is a question that does not concern us," said he, "except as another means to an end. Innocent or guilty, shall the pleasure or pain of one man stand between the millions of our countrymen and the welfare and perpetuity of France?"

"Never!" cried Mlle. Fouchette, in her excitement bringing down the salad-bowl with a crash that sent the pieces flying about the room.

"Parbleu!" exclaimed Jean, laughing heartily; "there goes my salad!"

"No; the salad is here. There goes my pretty bowl!"

"Very well, then, let us turn out to-morrow, Monsieur Marot, and do our duty. Au revoir."

In parting the artist nodded his head in cold recognition of the existence of Mlle. Fouchette. The latter

turned on her dainty heel with a glance at Jean that spoke volumes. But she began arranging the little table slowly, absent-mindedly, without a word. He thought she was lamenting the loss of the salad-bowl.

"I'll buy you a pretty one," he said.

"A pretty—er—a what?"

"Salad-bowl."

"Oh, dame! I was not thinking of the salad-bowl."

"Something more serious?"

"Yes. Don't go to-morrow, Monsieur Jean!"

Her voice was earnest, but sunk to a whisper. He regarded her with astonishment.

"Don't go, Monsieur Jean!" she repeated. "Have nothing to do with them! There will be two thousand hired roughs from La Villette, the killers from the abattoirs, and——" She stopped short.

"How now, mon enfant? How——"

But she had clapped her small hand over his mouth in a half-vexed, half-frightened way, with a definite gesture towards the next room.

"Have a care, monsieur," she whispered in his ear, then laughingly resumed her bantering tone. "How do you like my salad? Is it not capital?"

CHAPTER XI

Jean Marot found Mlle. Fouchette interesting but incomprehensible.

Jean believed himself to be a sincere and true republican,—and he was, in fact, quite as logical in this as were many of the so-called republicans of the French Parliament, who, like their familiar political prototypes in the United States, talked one way and voted another. He had participated in the street disturbances as a protest against the Ministry and for the pure love of excitement, not against the republic.

As to the Dreyfus case, he had been satisfied, with most of his countrymen, upon the statement of five successive ministers of war.

After all, in a country where so many have always stood ready to sell their national liberty for the gold of the stranger, it came easy to believe in one Judas more.

The United States has had but one Benedict Arnold; France counts her traitors by the thousands. They spring from every rank and are incidental to every age. The word Treachery is the most important word in French domestic history.

And when honest men doubted the justice of a council of war, they were silenced by the specious reasoning of men like M. de Beauchamp. Had Jean been invited to assist in overturning the republic and to put Philippe d'Orléans on the throne, he would have revolted. His political ideals would have been outraged. Yet every act committed by him and by his blind partisans tended directly, and were secretly engineered by others, to that end.

Jean Marot in this was but a fair type of tens of thousands of his intelligent but headstrong and misguided countrymen.

"In the street!"

Once in the street the following day, Jean forgot his serious reflections of the previous night. It was Sunday, the chosen day of battle by sea and land,—a day consecrated to violence and bloodshed by the Paris mob. The students gathered at the divided rendezvous of the Place Panthéon and the Place de l'Odéon. Many of them wore the white boutonniére of the Jeunesse Royalistes, the tricolor, the red rose of communism, or other badge of particular political belief, and all carried canes, some of which were loaded and some of the sword variety. Their leaders excitedly harangued them while the heavy squads of police agents distributed in the vicinity watched the proceedings without interference.

Indeed, the royalists and their allies had abundant reason to believe the police force of Paris, officers and men, civil and military, in sympathy with their movement against the republic. Not one of the many street disturbances of the year past had been the spontaneous outburst of popular anger that is the forerunner of revolution. On every occasion they had been, as they were in this instance, the publicly prearranged breaches of the peace in which the worst elements of the Paris world were invited or hired to join. This was well known to the government. It would have been easy and perfectly legal and wise to have anticipated them by governmental authority. Acting under that authority, a score or two of police agents could have dis-

persed all preliminary gatherings. Under the eye of such a police force as we have in New York any one of the numerous riots which disgraced the streets of Paris during the pendency of the "Affaire" would have been impossible.

The police of Paris, however, are French,—which is to say that they are incapable of seeing their duty from a strictly impersonal point of view, but are lax to the utmost indifference and partiality or brutal to the extreme of cruelty and fiendishness.

But perhaps the severest censure of the Paris police agent lies in the fact that no just magistrate accepts his unsupported testimony, and that at least two-thirds of his riot arrests are nullified at once by setting the victims at liberty. As the police agent is the creature of the general government and is not responsible to the municipality, he can only be brought to book when he makes the mistake of offending some high personage. To the complaint of an ordinary citizen he would probably reply by drawing his cloak around him and expectorating viciously.

"Qu'est-ce que ça me fiche?"

The students assembled at the Place du Panthéon easily avoided the shadowy blue barrier drawn up across the Rue Soufflot. They howled a good deal in unison, then suddenly disappeared down Rue Cujas, and, pouring into Boulevard St. Michel, joined forces at the foot of Rue Racine with their comrades from the Place de l'Odéon. Like all student manifestations of any sort, the procession made a great noise, sticks were brandished, and the air rent with cries of "Vive l'armée! À bas les traitres!"

The peaceful shopkeepers came to their doors and regarded the young men indulgently. "Ah! la jeunesse n'a q'un temps!"

Some four hundred young men from the great schools were joined at the Place St. Michel by numerous hoodlums and roughs from the purlieus of Rue St. Severin, Place Maubert, and the equally delectable region of Rue de la Hutchette. These patriot soldiers of fortune "émeuted" for the low rate of forty sous per day, and were mostly armed with bludgeons, wherewith to earn their meagre salary. It mattered little whom they served, though it was just now the noble Duc d'Orléans.

The police saw this addition with a knowing eye. They barred the entrance to the Pont St. Michel. It was a half-hearted effort, and with cries of "Vive la liberté!" "En avant!" the mob of young men swept the thin files out of the way and gained the bridge. Not, however, without some kicks and blows, broken canes, and bleeding faces. A lusty gold-laced brigadier rolled in the dust, desperately clinging to two coat-collars, and won the coveted cross by allowing himself to be kicked and stamped almost out of human resemblance by the infuriated mob of rescuers.

By this time the head of the mob had reached the other end of the bridge, where a double barrier of agents was drawn up across the street. A gray-haired commissaire of long and distinguished police service walked calmly forward alone to meet them. His resolute step, his pose, bespoke his dignity and courage. He raised his left hand with the air of authority accustomed to being obeyed.

His keen eyes at once sought and found and held the eyes of the leaders.

"You must go back,—you cannot cross here,—you must disperse——"

"Sacré!" growled the crowd, moving forward threateningly. "We have a right to cross anywhere! We are citizens of Paris and have the rights of any other citizen,—the same as you, Monsieur le Commissaire!"

A dozen such protests on the instant. But the wily veteran was ready. He knew that when a mob stops to parley the battle is half won.

"Oh, yes, messieurs,—singly, or as other good citizens, you are right; but not as——"

A young man reached over his comrades' shoulders and struck the old commissaire in the face with his cane.

"For shame!" cried Jean Marot, indignantly. "What foolishness!" And he broke the cane across his knee and threw the fragments to the ground.

In the same moment the old commissaire dashed into the crowd and single-handed dragged his youthful assailant to the front and clear of his companions.

"The guard! the guard! Look out, comrades! here comes the guard!"

The cry ran along the line and through the ranks hushed by the wanton blow delivered unnecessarily upon a respected official. A company of the Garde Républicaine à pied had filed out across the Boulevard du Palais from behind the Préfecture; another company à cheval debouched into the quai from the other corner, and now rode slowly down towards the bridge.

"Bayonets in front and sabres on the flank!" said Jean to those around him. "It were wise to get out of this."

"Good advice, young man,—get out! It won't do, you see. You must cross singly, or as other citizens. Never mind your hot-headed young friend," added the old man, kindly, as he wiped the blood from his face. "We won't be hard on him. Only, you must go back at once!"

He talked to them as if they were little children. But they needed no further urging. The rear-guard had already turned tail at the sight of the troops and were in full retreat. Before the last man had cleared the bridge the only one who had been arrested was set at liberty, though he had richly earned six months in jail.

And thus terminated the harebrained attempt to march five hundred riotous men through the city directly in front of the Préfecture, where lay unlimited reserves, civil and military, under arms. The royalists had somewhat overstrained the complaisance of the authorities.

Acting at once on the hint of the police official, the crowd broke up into small groups. "À la Concorde! à la Concorde! Concorde!" they cried.

This revolutionary rendezvous was prearranged to mean Place du Carrousel, conditional on police interference. It was to deceive the authorities, the main object being to form a junction with the anticipated hordes from Montmartre and La Villette.

But a mob broken into scattered groups is no longer a mob, and being no longer a mob, there is no longer

courage or cohesion of purpose. Instead of some four hundred students and about a hundred roughs, not more than fifty of the former responded at the foot of the Gambetta monument, while the latter class had gathered strength by the way.

This discrepancy, though painfully apparent to Jean Marot and his friends, in no wise dampened their ardor. Their chosen speakers lashed them into fresh furors of patriotism while they waited. The eloquent young man who quoted the words of Gambetta engraved on his monument wrung tears from his sympathetic auditors. These words of wisdom and patriotism had no pertinence whatever to the work in hand, —which was to break up a meeting organized by some distinguished philanthropists, scholars, and their friends in the interests of civil liberty and the perpetuity of human rights,—but everything serves as fuel to a flame well started.

Carried away by the spirit of exaltation, Jean Marot clambered upon the monument itself, and ascending the heroic figure of Gambetta amid the wild plaudits of the mob, kissed the mute stone lips. His hat had fallen to the ground, and now the hysterical crowd tore it into bits and scrambled for the pieces, which they pinned on their breasts as precious souvenirs of the occasion.

When Jean reached the earth it was to be frantically embraced on every side. A great, broad-shouldered, big-bearded man in a cap and the blouse of the artisan crowned this exciting ceremony by kissing the young student full on the mouth.

A score of hats were tendered, but Jean accepted the

cap of the stalwart workman, who immediately brandished his club and shouted "En avant!" He unwound his soiled red sash as he started, and, making it deftly into a sort of turban, constituted himself Jean's special body-guard for the day.

The strong force of police posted in the neighborhood of the Louvre had regarded this street drama with stoical indifference. When the noisy crowd surged into the Rue de Rivoli it passed between the mounted videttes of the Garde Républicaine. Farther on, in the Rue St. Honoré, a squad of dismounted cuirassiers stood listlessly holding the bridles of their horses. The afternoon sun flashed electric rays from the plates of burnished steel.

"Vive l'armée!" burst from the mob.

A subaltern on the curb touched his glittering casque in military salute without stirring a muscle of his armored body.

Now recognized leader, Jean directed the march up the narrow Rue de Richelieu, observing to his bearded aide that it was more direct and safe, though shouts of "Avenue de l'Opéra! l'Opéra!" rose from his followers. Jean paid no attention to these cries.

"You are right, my boy!" said the man in the blouse, patting Jean on the shoulder approvingly. "The broad streets are to the agents and military. The cuirassiers can there trample men like flies! Ah! with a regiment of cavalry and a battery of three quick-firers one could hold Paris at the Place de l'Opéra against the world!"

"Yes, my friend," answered Jean, with a smile, "always provided the world agreed not to drop thou-

sand-pound melinite shells or one from Mont Valérien or Montmartre, or from some other place."

"Yes, yes, yes,—you are right, my boy," admitted the other. "En avant!"

This man had the voice of a Stentor. He was also a Hercules of strength. Here and there the narrow street seemed blocked with vehicles; but when he did not terrorize the drivers into immediate flight at the sound of his voice and the sight of his club he would calmly lift the encumbrance and set it to one side.

"En avant!" he would then roar.

Where possible, however, all vehicles promptly fled the street save the omnibuses. From the imperiale of one of these came the cry,—

"Vive la république!"

"Vive l'armée!" yelled the mob.

"Vive la république!" came the response.

A dash was made for the omnibus. While four or five men held the horses a dozen or more clambered over the wheels and up the narrow steps behind. There were sixteen persons on top, seven of whom were women. The latter shrieked. Two fainted away. The assailants sprang upon the men and demanded the one who had dared to consider the health of the republic without the army. No one could or would point him out. On the apparently well established French principle that it is better that ten innocent should suffer punishment rather than that one guilty person should escape the patriotic young men assaulted everybody. A white-haired old man who protested was slapped in the face, another man was quieted by a brutal kick in the abdomen that doubled him up, a

couple of foreigners who could neither understand the language nor comprehend what it was all about were roughly handled, a half-grown boy was cuffed,—everybody but the driver came in for blows and insults; and this driver of the omnibus was in all probability the real villain.

"En avant!"

This lesson was administered en route, and without stopping the main body of manifestants pressed on into the grand boulevard, to be swallowed up in the resistless human current that now flowed down upon the Place de l'Opéra.

CHAPTER XII

A FORMIDABLE proportion of the grand concourse which filled the fashionable boulevards from curb to curb this beautiful Sunday afternoon was composed of the so-called "boulevardiers," "flâneurs," and "badauds," who invariably appear on occasion offering excitement. For the Parisian world loves to be amused, and to have the pulse quickened by riot and bloodshed is to very many the highest form of amusement. It is better than a bull-fight.

To most of this very large class of Parisians it is immaterial what form of government they live under, provided that in some way or another it furnish plenty of excitement. No other country in the civilized world, unless Spain is to be included under this head, produces this peculiar class, the unseen influence of which seems to have escaped the brilliant French writers who have recorded the turbulent history of France.

The cardinal characteristic of the French individually and as a people is love of and admiration for theatrical display. This finds such ample illustration in all of their known domestic as well as international affairs that even the mere statement seems unnecessary. It permeates every social rank, and it enters into the performance of the simplest private as well as public duties. In higher governmental affairs it was accurately represented by the late President of the republic, Felix Faure, who went among his countrymen in a coach and four preceded by trumpeters and accompanied by a regiment of cuirassiers, and who

required of his entourage all of the formalities of royalty. The hundreds of thousands who enjoyed his kingly funeral would have been equally entertained by a public execution.

In the French nature, as has been said, is implanted a keen zest for excitement. The Frenchman is ravenous for the theatrical situation,—a perfect gormandizer of the dramatic event. Whatever or whoever lacks this gilded framework is neither remembered nor noted. The supply invariably follows the demand; without spectators there would be no spectacle,—just as there is no sound where there are no ears.

Any Frenchman, therefore, who has any theatrical novelty to offer, whether as a political mountebank, or a bogus hero, or a peculiarly atrocious crime, is sure of a large audience. For there is a wide range of appreciation in that mercurial nature which, according to Voltaire, is half monkey and half tiger.

The evident pleasure with which vast Parisian crowds view riots and revolution and the various phases of alternate anarchy and absolutism may be easily and naturally accepted by the actors in these living dramas as tacit if not positive approval. The professional patriot does not perform to empty seats, and the few hundred hired assassins of the public peace and private liberty would be out of a job but for the hundred thousand passive and more or less amused spectators who scramble for the best places to witness and make merry over the show.

That this curious crowd is greatly swelled by what in other lands is recognized as the gentler or softer sex increases its responsibility. The civilization whch has

produced so many women of the heroic type, so many of the nobler masculine brain and hand, has also generated a vast brood which poisons the germs of human life and hands down bigotry, intolerance, revengefulness, cruelty, and love of turbulence and bloodshed from generation to generation.

Of the performers before this audience Jean Marot and his stalwart companion found themselves particularly observed from their début. The red turban was conspicuous enough, and gave a theatrical aspect to the man who wore it. There was that in his ensemble which recalled the great Revolution and the scarcely less sanguinary conflicts of '71. By his side and contrasting strangely with the coarse brute features of this muscular humanity was the finely chiselled face of the student under the rough cap of the workman. A picturesque pair, they were greeted on all sides with all sorts of cries and comments:

"That red cap is very appropriate."

"It is the head-dress of the barricades."

"Sure!"

"Of la Villette, hein?"

"The man is mad!"

"Ah! look at that!"

"There goes a good rascal."

"A young man and his father perhaps."

"No!"

"Long live the students!"

"En avant!" roared the man in the red turban.

"Vive l'anarchie!" shouted an individual on the curb whose eyes were glazed from absinthe.

The crowd laughed. Some applauded,—not so much

the sentiment as the drunken wit. The people were being entertained.

"We certainly have the street this day," observed Jean to his companon.

"Right you are, my boy!"

Both noted the squadron of cuirassiers drawn up in front of the Opéra, the police agents massed on either side, and the regiment of the line under arms in the Rue 4 Septembre close at hand. In the middle distance a squadron of the Garde de Paris came leisurely up the Avenue de l'Opéra.

"You see, my friend," said Jean, smiling, "the government is looking sharply after its strategic position."

"Vive l'armée!"

The man in the red turban swung his bâton, and his resounding cry was caught up by the manifestants. It was the voice of flattery and conciliation extended to the army, through which the royalist party hoped to win a throne.

But they were not alone there. From several quarters came sharp rejoinders of "Vive la justice!" "Vive la république!" "Vive la France!"

While these cries seemed harmless if not proper, they were judged seditious by the police, who made a dash for those who uttered them. In another instant the man with the red turban would have saved the agents the trouble of arresting the nearest person had not Jean grasped the bâton. The brute face had taken on a flush of red ferocity. His blow restrained, the man spat in the face of his intended victim and strode on.

"Not yet, my friend!" exclaimed the student leader. "What! precipitate a fight here! Madness! We

should be ridden down within three minutes! The government will be sure to protect the Opéra."

"Yes; you are always right, mon enfant," growled the man.

Meanwhile, the unfortunate Parisian who wanted "justice" got it; being dragged off by two police agents, who took turns in kicking and cuffing their prisoner on the way to the dépôt. There he was charged with uttering seditious cries calculated to lead to a breach of the peace.

Gathering confidence from immunity, however, the manifestants soon ceased to observe this respect for public opinion. In Boulevard Haussmann they got out from the eye of the military. They began to hustle those who happened to get in their way. Those who were not sufficiently explicit in their views were compelled to cry "Vive l'armée;" whoever refused was promptly knocked on the head.

"Monsieur Front de Bœuf," said Jean Marot to his companion, who had narrowly missed spattering the young leader with the brains of a misguided Dreyfusarde, "if you will strike less heavily you will longer remain with us, and possibly for a time escape the guillotine. Let us do no murder, mon ami. Your stick is heavy."

"That's so; but it is a lovely stick all the same," replied the man, with a satisfied air, as he wiped the blood from his hands upon his blouse.

Then for the first time Jean noticed that this blouse bore many old stains of the same sanguinary color. Undoubtedly it was blood. Human? Faugh!

Jean saw around him other men of the same type,

red-faced and strong-limbed, mentally as well as physically saturated with the brutality of their calling. He thought of Mlle. Fouchette. It was true, then, that these human brutes from the abattoirs were here. That other type, the "camelot,"—he of the callous, cadaverous face, thinly clad body, cunning eyes, husky lungs,—was more familiar.

But these butchers of La Villette, why were they royalists? What special interest had the killers of cattle in the restoration of the monarchy? They had emphasized their devotion to the Duc d'Orléans by re-electing his parliamentary leader, the Comte de Sabran, by an overwhelming vote. From the rich and influential wholesaler to the low hind whose twelve hours a day were passed in knocking bullocks on the head or in slitting throats with precision the butchers stood three to one for the royal régime. Men may be hired for certain services, but in such a case as this there must exist some natural sentiment at bottom. This sentiment was perhaps only the common French intolerance of existing things.

Jean Marot's train of thought had not reached that far, owing to fresh differences of opinion between some of his followers and the spectators, in which it became necessary for a dozen men to kick one helpless fellowman into insensibility.

They were now nearing the proposed place of meeting, and the hitherto scattered cries of "Vive la justice!" "Vive la liberté!" "Vive la France!" and "Vive la république!" had developed into well-defined opposition. Personal collisions, blows, objurgations, came thicker and faster.

Finally, from the "terrasse" of a fashionable café in the Boulevard Malesherbes came very decided expressions of dissent. They were followed by a general assault on the place. Not less than thirty of the usual respectable Sunday afternoon "consommateurs" occupied the chairs, and, though not more than half a dozen of these could have offended, the mob came down upon them like a living avalanche, throwing the entire Sunday party of both sexes promiscuously among the débris of tables, chairs, glasses, and drinks.

The women shrieked, the men cursed loudly, and everybody struggled in the general wreck. While the male portion were kicked and stamped where they lay, the feminine part of the café crowd fought tooth and nail to escape in any direction.

There were three dissatisfied beings, however, who objected to this summary treatment, and who, having regained a footing, courageously defended themselves with the nearest weapons at hand. These were empty beer-glasses, which, being fraudulently double thick at the bottom, were admirably designed for that particular use. But when three beer-glasses conflict with twenty loaded canes the former, however valiantly wielded, must succumb to the rule of the majority. Among the latter, too, was the particularly heavy stick of the patriot from the abattoirs of La Villette. He had received a blow from a glass that laid his cheek open and had jumped upon his assailant.

"Death!" he roared.

The man sank without a groan amid the broken glass, beer, and blood. The savage aimed a terrific

blow of the boot at the upturned face, but was jostled out of his aim. Again, and with the snarl of a wild beast; but a woman had thrown herself across the prostrate figure and encircled the still form with her protecting arm. The butcher would have planted his iron-shod heel upon her, but at this critical juncture another woman—a slender, pale, weak-looking thing whose blonde hair fell loosely over her rouged cheeks —flew at him with a scream half human, half feline,— such as chills the blood in the midnight of the forest. With one hand she tore out great bunches of beard by the roots, with the other she left red furrows on his face like the paths of a garden-rake. Quick as lightning-flashes, again and again, and with each successive stroke of her claws came the low, hysterical whine of the wild beast.

It was Mlle. Fouchette.

Her catlike jaws were distended and quivering,— the white teeth glistened,—the eyes of steel seemed to emit sparks of fire,—the small, lithe body swayed and undulated like that of an angry puma.

"Yes!—so!—death!—yes!—death!—you!—beast! —you devil!"

With each energetic word went a wild sweep of the claws or came a wisp of beard.

The man bellowed with pain. The unexpected fury of her onslaught, the general mêlée of close quarters, the instinct of protection, contributed to prevent the man from simply braining her with his "casse-tête." He was a lion against a hornet, powerless to punish his puny assailant. As he finally broke away, she

suddenly whirled and delivered beneath the arm that shielded his eyes a kick that half choked him with his own teeth.

Blinded with blood and howling with pain, the wretch plunged headlong through the café front amid a crash of falling glass.

In the mean time, while this little curtain-raiser had been getting under way, there was still another and more important drama in active preparation.

The police, as if to lend such material aid to the royalist cause as lay in their power, and to assist in the punishment of those misguided Frenchmen who took the words "Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité," inscribed over the doors of the public hall, in a too literal sense, had violently closed those doors against the latter and by cunningly arranged barriers driven the unsuspecting Dreyfusardes down upon their armed enemies. It was a most admirably arranged plot to destroy the public peace, and reflected credit upon the clerico-royalist-military council that had planned it.

Before the indignant republicans had begun to realize the character of the trap set for them they found themselves hemmed in on three sides by the police and attacked by the combination of hostile forces on the other side.

The latter had been quietly assembled in the vicinity in anticipation of this dénouement. They were led by Senators and Deputies wearing the official scarf of their high legislative function. This at once afforded the latter reasonable immunity from arrest, and served to encourage and assure those accustomed to look for

some shadow of authority to conceal or excuse the evil of their deeds.

The French Senator or Deputy who leads street rioters against a peaceable assemblage of his fellow-citizens one day and serenely sits in national legislative deliberation the next day is the faithful representative of a constituency as far removed from the American type of citizenship as the French legislator is from our national legislator.

With shouts of "Vive l'armée!" "À bas les vendus!" "Vive France aux Français!" "À bas les Juifs!" the waiting combination, or "nationalistes," fell upon their victims with fist, heel, and club. This was not as a body, the assailants being cleverly scattered everywhere through the crowd, and assaulting individually and supporting each other where resistance was encountered. As many were mere spectators, they were compelled to declare themselves or come in for a share of the drubbing, though this opportunity for escape was not always offered or accepted.

The pure love of fighting is strong in the French as in the Irish breast, and once roused the Frenchman is not too particular whose head comes beneath his bâton.

It naturally happened, therefore, that on this occasion the innocent curious of all opinions received impartial treatment, often without knowing to which side they were indebted for their thumping. Every man thus assaulted at once became a rioter and began the work on his own particular account. Within a brief period not less than a hundred personal combats

were going on at the same moment. As far as the eye could reach the broad boulevard was a surging sea of scuffling humanity, above which rose a cloud of dust and a continuous roar of angry voices. To the distant ear this was as one voice,—that of terrible imprecation.

Having thus ingeniously united the conflicting currents in one tempest, the police precipitated themselves on the whole.

Had any additional element been required to bring things to the highest stage of combativeness this would have answered quite well. As interference in family affairs almost invariably brings the wrath of both parties down on the peacemaker, so now the police began to receive their share of the public attention.

The Parisian population have not that docile disposition and submissive respect for authority characteristic of our Americans. The absence of the night-stick and ready revolver must be supplied by overwhelming physical force. Even escaping criminals cannot be shot down in France with impunity.

Though deprived of both clubs and sabres and not trusted with revolvers, these police agents make good use of hands and feet. Not being bound by the rules of the ring, their favorite blow is the blow below the belt. It is viciously administered by both foot and knee. Next to that is the kick on the shins, which, delivered by a heavy, iron-shod cowhide boot, is pretty apt to render the recipient hors de combat. Supplemented by a quick fist and directed by a quicker temper, the French police agent is no mean antagonist in a general row. In brutality and impulsive cruelty

he is but the flesh and blood of those with whom he has mostly to deal.

The battle now raged with increasing violence, the combatants being slowly driven down upon the approaching manifestants from the Quartier Latin, Montmartre, and La Villette. It had become everybody's fight, the original Dreyfusardes having been largely eliminated by nationaliste clubs and police arrests. The ambulances and cellular vans, playfully termed "salad-baskets," thoughtfully stationed in the side streets, were being rapidly filled, and as fast as filled were driven to hospital and prison respectively.

The reverberating roar of human voices beat against the tall buildings, rising and falling in frightful diapason, as if it were the echo from a thousand savage creatures of the jungle clashing their fangs in deadly combat.

Jean Marot and his immediate followers had scarcely turned from the scene at the café before they were swallowed up in the vortex that now met them. Indeed, Jean had not witnessed either the horrible brutality of the butcher or his punishment. The cries of "Les agents! à bas les agents!" had suddenly carried him elsewhere on the field of battle. He found himself, fired by the fever of conflict, in the middle of the broad street so closely surrounded by friends and foes that sticks were encumbrances. A short arm blow only was now and then effective. A dozen police agents were underfoot somewhere, being pitilessly stamped and trampled by the frantic mob. The platoon that had charged was wiped out as a platoon. Those who were hemmed in fought like demons. Men

throttled each other and swayed back and forth and yelled imprecations and fell in struggling masses and got upon their feet again and twisted and squirmed and panted, like so many monsters, half serpent and half beast, seeking to bury their fangs in some vital part or tear each other limb from limb.

Suddenly Jean saw rise before him a face that drove everything else from his mind. It was that of one who saw him at the same instant. And when these bloodshot eyes of passion met a fierce yell of wrath burst from the two men.

It was Henri Lerouge.

He was hatless and his clothes were in shreds and covered with the grime of the street. His hair was matted with coagulated blood,—his lips were swollen hideously. A police agent in about the same condition held him by the throat.

When Henri Lerouge saw Jean Marot he seemed imbued with the strength of a giant and the agility of a cat. He shook off the grip of the agent as if it were that of a child and at a bound cleared the struggling group that separated him from his former friend.

They grappled without a word and without a blow, and, linked in the embrace of mortal hatred, rolled together in the dust.

The cruel human waves broke over them and rolled on and receded, and went and came again, and eddied and seethed and roared above them.

These two rose no more.

CHAPTER XIII

When the police, supported by the Garde de Paris, had finally swept the boulevard clear of the mob, they found among the human débris two men locked in each other's grasp, insensible. The imprint on two throats showed with what desperate ferocity they had clung to each other. Indeed, their hands were scarcely yet relaxed from exhaustion. Their faces were black and their tongues protruded.

In the nearest pharmacy, where ambulances were being awaited by a dozen others, Jean Marot quickly revived under treatment. The case of Henri Lerouge, however, was more serious. He had received a severe cut in the head early in the row and the young surgeon in charge feared internal injuries. Artificial means were required to induce respiration. This was restored slowly and laboriously. At the first sign of life he murmured,—

"Andrée! Sister! Ah! my poor little sister!"

Jean roused himself. The sounds of voices and wheels came to him indistinctly. Everything merged in these words,—

"Andrée! Sister!"

Then again all was blank.

When he revived he was first of all conscious of a gentle feminine touch,—that subtle something which cools the fevered veins and softens the pangs of suffering, mind and body.

He felt it rather as if it were a dream, and kept his eyes closed for fear the dream would vanish. The

hand softly bathed his head, which consciously lay in a woman's lap. He remembered but one hand—his mother's—that had soothed him thus, and the sweet souvenir provoked a deep sigh.

"Ah! mon Dieu!" murmured the voice of Mlle. Fouchette.

"L'hôpital ou dépôt?" inquired the nearest agent.

"Dépôt," said the sous-brigadier.

"Oh! no! no!" exclaimed the girl, indignantly. "See, messieurs; he is wounded and weak, and——"

"One moment!"

A young surgeon knelt and applied his ear to the heaving breast, while the police agents whispered among each other.

Mlle. Fouchette caught the words, "It is La Savatière," and smiled faintly, but was at once recalled to the situation by a pair of open eyes through which Jean Marot regarded her intently.

"So! It—it is only Mademoiselle Fouchette. I——"

He saw the cloud that rose upon her face and heard the gentle humility of her reply,—

"Yes, monsieur, it is only Fouchette. How do you find yourself, Monsieur Jean?"

She put a flask of brandy to his lips and saw him swallow a mouthful mechanically. Suddenly he raised himself to a sitting posture and looked anxiously about.

"Where is he?"

"Who? Where is who, monsieur?"

"Lerouge. Why, he was here but now. Where is he?"

"Lerouge! That wretch!" cried the girl, with passion. "I could strangle him!"

"Oh! no, no, no!" he interposed." It is a mistake. His sister, Fouchette——"

His glance was more than she could bear. She would have drawn him back to her as a mother protects a sick child, only a rough hand interposed.

"See! he raves, messieurs."

"Let him rave some more," said the sous-brigadier. "This is our affair. So it was Monsieur Lerouge, was it? Very good! Henri Lerouge, medical student, Quartier Latin, anarchist, turbulent fellow, rascal,—well cracked this time!"

Jean looked from the girl to the man and laid himself back in her arms without a word.

"Make a note," continued the police official,—"bad characters, both. This man goes to dépôt!"

"For shame!" cried Mlle. Fouchette.

"And hear this!" added the sous-brigadier in an angry voice,—"if this grisette of Rue St. Jacques gives you any of her guff run her in!"

"But—no, monsieur, that you will not! My business is here,—my authority above your authority,—and here I will remain!"

"Show it!" demanded the official.

She regarded him wrathfully.

"Very well, mademoiselle," said he, choking back his anger. "I know my duty and will not be interfered with by——"

"Gare à vous!" she interrupted, threateningly.

"Don't!" whispered Jean. "It is nothing. But tell me quickly,—has Lerouge gone to prison?"

"Hôtel Dieu," she replied.

"Good! Go to his place, 7 Rue Dareau, you know,—tell her,—Mademoiselle Remy,—his sister, Fouchette——"

She bent lower over his head, hiding her face from his sight.

"Ah! what a fool I have been, Fouchette! Tell her gently—that he is injured—slightly, mind—and where he is. That's a good girl, Fouchette,—good girl that you are!"

He could not see her face for the hair that fell over the bowed head,—the living picture of the repentant Magdalen. But he felt her warm breath upon his cheek, and, was it a tear that splashed hotly on his neck?

But she merely pressed his hand for a reply and, disengaging her dress, darted from the place.

Threading her way rapidly among the arriving and departing vans and ambulances, the scattered remnants of the mob and the swarms of shifting police agents, Mlle. Fouchette finally reached a street open to traffic.

It was only at rare intervals that she indulged herself in a cab. This was one of the times. Hailing the first-comer, she jumped in and called out to the fat cabby, "Place Monge."

He drove thoughtfully as far as the next corner and then inquired over his shoulder where Place Monge was. She stood up behind him and fairly screamed in his ear,—

"Square Monge, espèce de melon! Quartier Latin!"

The bony horse started up at the sound of her voice as from the lash. Evidently, Mlle. Fouchette was not

in good temper. She had no relish for the work of good-will cut out for her. She was disgusted at the weakness of man. If she had been driver at that moment she would have run down a few of them en route. Still, her cocher did his best.

At Place du Parvis Notre Dame she called out to him to stop. Getting out, she bade him wait near by, and started down along the quai in front of the Préfecture de Police. The man seemed suspicious and kept a sharp eye on his fare. Just as he was about to follow the girl he saw her start back, as if she had changed her mind.

She began to walk very rapidly towards him, looking neither to the right nor to the left. A man in a soft hat who had just left the Préfecture crossed the street in the opposite direction and, curiously enough, though there was an empty desert of space in the vicinity, the two jostled each other almost rudely and exchanged angry words.

After which the girl retook her place in the fiacre and said "Allons!" in a subdued tone that strongly contrasted with her former ascerbity.

"Sure!" said the cabby to himself,—"she's drunk." And he looked forward to the near future rather gloomily.

His suspicion seemed more than justified when she again said Place Monge instead of Square Monge, the former being nearly half a mile farther. He almost collapsed when she finally got down and not only handed him the legal fare without dispute but double the usual pourboire.

"Toujours de même ces femmes-là!" he growled,

philosophically. Which meant that women were pretty much alike,—you never could tell what one of them would do.

Mlle. Fouchette, quite indifferent at any time to the private judgment of the cab-driving world, now silently and swiftly pursued the uneven tenor of her thoughts, not yet manifest. She hurried along the sombre walls of the giant caserne de la garde on the Rue Ortolan, plunged across the crowded Rue Mouffetard, and entered the picturesque little wine-shop on the corner.

It was a low, grim, two-story affair in time-worn stone, the door and windows heavily grilled in the elaborate and artistic wrought-iron work of the middle ages. A heavy oaken door supplemented the big barred gate and added to the ancient prison-like appearance of the place. Against the grilles of the Rue Mouffetard hung specimens of the filthy illustrated Paris papers, either the pictures or text of which would debar them from any respectable English-speaking community. Over the door opening into the Rue du Pot de Fer and below a lamp of that exquisite iron-work which is now one of the lost arts was displayed a small bush, intimating that, in spite of the strong improbability, good wine was to be had inside.

While a casual glance showed that the rooms above could not be high enough of ceiling for an ordinary individual to stand upright, the flowers in the little square recessed and grilled windows showed that this upper portion was inhabited. It was connected with the wine-shop below by a narrow and very much worn stone staircase, which ascended "à tire-bouchon," or corkscrew fashion, like the steep steps of a light-house.

As to the general reputation of the neighborhood, Mlle. Fouchette knew it to be "assez mauvaise,"—tolerably bad,—though it was not this knowledge that induced her to complete her journey on foot.

Her entrance caused a subdued but perceptible flutter among the occupants of the resort. These were, at the moment, four respectable-looking men in blouses, an old gentleman in the last stage of genteel rustiness, and a couple of camelots in the second stage of drunkenness,—that of undying friendship. The four, who appeared to be worthy tradesmen of the neighborhood, occupied a far table in the small and time-begrimed room, where they played at cards for small stakes; the rusty old gentleman sat alone with a half-emptied beer-glass and an evening newspaper before him; the street-hawkers were standing at the zinc, which in Paris represents our American bar, discussing the events of the day in the hoarse-lunged, insolent tone of their class.

Presiding over the establishment was—yes, it was Madame Podvin. Somewhat stouter, redder of face, more piggy of eye, with more decided whiskers, but still Madame Podvin.

She busied herself behind the zinc washing glasses, occasionally glancing at the men in the corner, smiling upon the inebriated camelots, and now and then casting a suspicious eye upon the quiet old gentleman behind his beer.

Madame Podvin had retired from the Rendez-Vous pour Cochers upon the retirement of Monsieur Podvin from public life by the State, and had found this congenial city resort vacant by reason of death,—the pro-

prietor having been stabbed by one of his friendly customers over the question of pay for a drink of four sous.

Upon the entrance of Mlle. Fouchette Madame Podvin tapped the zinc sharply with the glass as if to knock something out of it, then greeted the new-comer effusively.

The four men hastily gathered up their stakes and began talking about the weather; the subdued camelots sipped their absinthe in silence; the old gentleman fell to reading his paper with renewed interest.

"Bonjour, madame," said Mlle. Fouchette, smilingly ignoring the private signal, though inwardly vexed.

"Mademoiselle Fouchette! Ah! how charming of you!" exclaimed Madame Podvin, hastily wiping her hands and coming around the open end of the bar to embrace her visitor.

Beneath the most elaborate politeness the Parisian conceals the bitterest hatred. French politeness is mostly superficial at best,—it often scarcely hides a cynicism that stings without words, a satire that bites to the verge of insult. The more Frenchwomen dislike each other the more formal and overpowering their compliments—if they do not come to blows.

"Thank you very much, madame," Mlle. Fouchette replied, as Madame Podvin kissed her cheeks. "Ah! you are always so gay and delightful, madame!"

"And how lovely you have grown to be!" exclaimed the Podvin, with a good show of enthusiasm, holding the girl off at arm's length for inspection. "It seems impossible that you should have come out of a rag-heap! And your sweet disposition——"

Madame Podvin elevated her hands in sheer despair of being able to describe it.

"It must go well with you, madame, you are always so amiable and cheerful," retorted Mlle. Fouchette.

"But you are more lovely every day you grow older," said Madame Podvin.

"Ah! Madame does not grow older!"

"Fouchette, chérie, I'm sure you must belong to a good family, you are so naturally winning and well-bred. The clothes you had on when I found you——"

"Madame?"

"I gave them away—for twenty—yes, it was twenty francs—they were not worth as many sous—to a gentleman——"

Madame Podvin stopped at the sight of Mlle. Fouchette's face; but, uncertain whether the subject pained, interested, or irritated the latter, she continued,——

"It was shortly after you left. He was very curious,—one of these government spies, you know, Fouchette——"

"Madame, I would see Mademoiselle Madeleine," interrupted the other.

Madame Podvin frowned.

"Not sick, I hope," added Fouchette.

"Oh! no; only——"

"Drinking?"

"Like a fish!"

"Poor Madeleine!"

"She's a beast!" cried Madame Podvin.

Madame Podvin sold vile liquor but despised the fools who drank it, and in this she was not singular.

"Is she——" Mlle. Fouchette raised her eyes heavenward inquiringly.

"No,—she's in the street. Ever since she got out of the hospital she has been going from bad to worse every day. And she owes me two weeks' lodging. If she doesn't pay up soon I'll——"

Whatever the Podvin intended to do with Madeleine she left it unsaid, for the latter stood in the doorway.

Great, indeed, was the change which had come over this unfortunate girl. Stout to repulsiveness, shabby of attire, fiery of face, unsteady of pose, with one bright beautiful eye burning with the supernatural fire of absinthe, the other sealed in internal darkness.

"Oh! Madeleine——" began Mlle. Fouchette, painfully impressed and hesitating.

"What! No! Fouchette? Mon ange!"

The drunken woman staggered forward to embrace her friend.

"Why, Madeleine——"

"Hold! And first tell me your bad news. You know you always bring me bad news, deary. You hunt me up when you have bad news. Come, now!"

"Là, là, là, là!" trilled Mlle. Fouchette, passing her arm around the other's thick waist to gain time.

"Come! mon ange,—we'll have a drink anyhow. Mère! some absinthe,—we have thirst."

"No, no; not now, Madeleine."

"Not a drop here!" said Madame Podvin, seeing that Mlle. Fouchette was not disposed to pay.

"Not now," interposed the latter,—"a little later. I want a word or two with you, Madeleine, first. Just two minutes!"

The one brilliant orb regarded the girl intently, as if it would dive into her soul; but the habitual good-nature yielded.

"Very well. Come then, chérie,—à l'impériale!"

And, indeed, the narrow, spiral stair more closely resembled that which leads to the impériale of the Paris omnibus than anything found in the modern house.

The space above was divided in four, the first part being the small antechamber, dimly lighted from the roof, which they now entered. Through a door to the right they were in a room one-third of which was already occupied by an iron camp-bed. The rest of the furniture consisted of a little iron washstand, a chair, and some sort of a box covered with very much soiled chintz that was once pretty. Above this latter article of furniture was a small shelf, on which were coquettishly arranged a folding mirror and other cheap articles of toilet. A few fans of the cheap Japanesque variety were pinned here and there in painful regularity. A cheap holiday skirt and other feminine belongings hung on the wall over the cot. In the small, square, recessed window opening on Rue Mouffetard were pots of flowering plants that gave an air of refinement and comfort to a place otherwise cheerless and miserable.

And over all of this poverty and wretchedness hung a blackened ceiling so low that the feather of Mlle. Fouchette swept it,—so low and dark and heavy and lugubrious that it seemed to threaten momentarily to crush out what little human life and happiness remained there.

Madeleine silently motioned her visitor to the chair

and threw herself on the creaking bed. She waited, suspiciously.

"The riots, you know, Madeleine," began Mlle. Fouchette.

"Dame! There is always rioting. One hears, but one doesn't mind."

"Unless one has friends, Madeleine——"

The maimed and half-drunken woman tried to straighten up.

"Well? Out with it, Fouchette. If one has friends in the row——"

"Why, then we feel an interest in our friends, n'est-ce pas?"

"It is about Lerouge!"

"Yes, Madeleine, I want——"

"Is he hurt?"

"Yes,—badly,—and is at the Hôtel Dieu. I want his address. He has moved from 7 Rue Dareau since the police—since——"

"You want his address for the police," said the girl.

"Oh! no! no! not for that, dear!"

"Not for that; then what for? Tell me why you want it."

This was exactly what Mlle. Fouchette evidently did not desire to do. Madeleine saw it, and added firmly,—

"Tell me first, then—well, then I'll see."

"I will, then," rejoined the other, savagely.

"Speak!"

"I wish to notify his sister."

Madeleine looked at the speaker fixedly, as if still waiting for her to begin; stupidly, for her poor muddled brain refused to comprehend.

Mlle. Fouchette continued,—

"I say I wish to go to his place," she said, with great deliberation, "and notify his sister that her brother is injured and is lying at Hôtel Dieu. I promised. It is important. Believing you knew the address I have come to you. You will help me, for his sister's sake,—for his sake, Madeleine? You know his sister lives with him——"

"You—you said his sister——"

But the voice choked. The words came huskily, like a death-rattle in her throat.

"Yes, sister," began again Mlle. Fouchette. But she was almost afraid now. The aspect of her listener's face was enough to touch even a harder heart than possessed this not too tender bearer of ill news.

However, Madeleine would have heard nothing more. She gazed vacantly at the opposite wall, a knee between her hands, and swaying slightly to and fro. Her face, bloated with drink, had become almost pale, and was the picture of long-settled grief. It was as if she were in fresh mourning for the long ago.

Presently a solitary tear from the unseen and unseeing eye stole out of its dark retreat and rolled slowly and reluctantly down upon the cheek and stopped and dried there.

Mlle. Fouchette saw it as the weather observer sees the moisture on the glass and speculated on the character of the coming storm.

She was disappointed. For instead of an explosion Madeleine suddenly rose and began fumbling among the garments on the wall without a word. She selected the best from her humble wardrobe and laid the pieces

out one by one on the bed, then began rapidly to divest herself of what she wore.

When interrogated by the wondering Fouchette she never replied. Indeed, she no longer appeared to notice that her visitor was there. She bathed her face, and washed her hands, and scrubbed her white teeth, and carefully rearranged her hair. All of this with a calmness and precision of a perfectly sober woman,—as she now undoubtedly was. She then resumed her hat.

"How!" exclaimed Mlle. Fouchette, noting this quiet preparation with growing astonishment,—"not going out?"

"Yes," replied the girl.

"But, dear, you have not yet given me the address."

"It is unnecessary."

"But, Madeleine!"

"It is unnecessary, Fouchette. I will go and see his —his sister and lead her to him."

"But, deary!"

"And I will go alone," she added, looking at the other for the first time.

Unmindful of the wheedling voice of remonstrance, without another word, and leaving her door wide open and Mlle. Fouchette to follow or not at her pleasure, the miserable girl gained the street and swiftly sped away through the falling shadows of the night.

CHAPTER XIV

JEAN MAROT occupied a cell in a "panier à salade" en route for the dépôt, not so much the worse for his recent exciting experience as at first seemed probable he might be.

There were eight other occupants of the prison-van besides himself, one of whom was a soldier guard. Five narrow cells ranged along either side of a central aisle. Each had a solitary small, closely shuttered breathing-hole opening outside. The guard occupied a seat in the aisle near the rear door, from which he could survey the door of every cell. By this arrangement prisoners were kept separate from each other, were not subjected to a gaping crowd, and ten persons could be safely escorted by a single guard.

From the half-suppressed murmurs and objurgations that followed every severe jolt of the wagon, Jean rightly judged that most of the prisoners were more or less injured. And as the driver drove furiously, having the right of way and being pressed with business this particular Sunday afternoon, there were still louder and more exhaustive remarks from those who narrowly escaped being run over by the cellular van.

Jean Marot, however, was too much engrossed with his own miserable reflections to pay any more than mechanical attention to all of this. Physically resuscitated and momentarily inflating his glad lungs anew, he still felt that terrible vice-like grip upon his throat, —the compression of the fingers of steel that seemed to squeeze the last drop of blood from his heart.

But it was mental suffocation now. For they were

the fingers of her brother,—the flesh and sinew of the woman he loved! And it was this love that was being cruelly crushed and strangled.

It was more terrible than the late physical struggle. The latter had invoked the energy, the courage, and the superhuman strength and endurance to meet it,—had roused the fire of conscious manhood. Now the sick soul revolted at its own folly. The props of self-respect had been knocked away, and he lay prone, humiliated, deprived of the initial courage to rise and hope.

The chief cause of this self-degradation lay in the fact that he had grievously wronged the only one in the world he had found worth loving,—the one sweet being for whom he would have willingly sacrificed life. The fact that this wrong was by and in thought alone did not lessen the horrible injustice of it.

The more Jean thought of these things the more sick at heart he was, the more hopeless his love became, the more desperately dark the future appeared. There seemed to be nothing left but misery and death.

This train of bitterness was interrupted by a violent wrangle between the occupants of neighboring cells. A prisoner across the way had shouted "Vive l'armée!" Another responded by the gay chanson,—

> "Entre nous, l'armée du salut,
> Elle n'a jamais eu d'autre but
> Que d'amasser d' la bonne galette."

It came from his next-door neighbor, and was the familiar voice of the saturnine George Villeroy.

"Shut your mouth, rascal!" yelled the guard, rapping the cell door with his sword bayonet.

A few minutes later the van was stopped, the rear door opened, and one by one the prisoners, bloody, torn, and bedraggled, were handed out and hustled not very gently by two police agents through a heavily grilled doorway into a room already crowded with victims of law and order. All of these were yet to be called before the commissaire and interrogated in turn, and by him either held or discharged. A good many were both hatless and coatless, and altogether they certainly bore a riotous and suspicious look.

In the crowd near the desk where they were led to be registered Jean met his old friend Villeroy.

"Oho!" exclaimed the latter, laughingly.

"Oh, yes; it is I, my friend."

"Pinched this time, hein?"

"So it seems."

"And in what company?"

"Yours, I suppose," retorted Jean.

"Good company!" said Villeroy. "Kill any—any agents?"

"No,—no!" said Jean, who did not relish this subject.

"See Lerouge?"

"N—that is——"

"The misérable!"

"Oh, as for that——"

"Well, he's done for, anyhow."

"Wha-at?"

"His goose is cooked!"

"How is that? Not——"

"Dead."

"Dead!"

"As a mackerel!"

Jean paled perceptibly and almost staggered against his friend.

"Impossible!" he murmured. "It can't be! How——"

"Oh, easy enough," interrupted the other, lightly. "Some ruffian choked him to death, they say. Liable to occur, is it not? Sorry, of course, but——"

Fortunately for Jean's self-control, they were rudely separated by two angry opponents who wanted to fight it out then and there. He would have betrayed himself in another moment. And, wrought up to the present tension, it seemed as if he must go mad and shriek his guilt to all the world.

He sought an obscure corner and sat down on the floor with his back to the wall, his chin upon his knees.

In his own soul he was condemned already. He only awaited the guillotine.

When he was aroused the room was almost cleared. A couple of agents roughly hustled him before the busy commissaire. It was the old official the student had struck that morning. The red welt across his face gave it a sinister appearance. He glanced at the arraigned, then read from the blotter,—

"Jean Marot, student,—um, um, um!—charged with —with—let's see—with uttering seditious cries calculated to lead to a breach of the peace. What have you got to say for yourself, young man?"

The prisoner had nothing to say for himself,—at least, nothing better than that,—so he was speechless.

"Ah! evidently never been here before," said the old commissaire. "Go! and never come here again. Discharged. Call the next."

"Monsieur le Commissaire," began a police agent who had here risen to his feet with an air of remonstrance,—"monsieur——"

"Call the next!" said the commissaire, waving the agent down peremptorily.

And thus Jean Marot, before he had recovered from his surprise, or could even realize what had happened, was again hustled through the corridor, this time to be unceremoniously thrust into the street—a free man.

"Hold, Monsieur Jean!" said the lively voice of Mlle. Fouchette. "What a precious long time you have been!"

"It might have been longer," he remarked, vaguely accepting her presence as not unnatural, and suffering himself to be led down the block.

"Oh, here it is," said she, going straight to a cab in waiting. "Now, don't stop to ask questions or I'll be wicked. Get in! Dinner is——"

"Dinner is, is it?" he repeated, almost hysterically.

He felt exhausted physically and mentally, indifferent as to what now befell him, prepared to accept anything. Nothing could be worse. He felt as if everything was crumbling beneath his feet. There was nobody to lean against, nobody to sympathize with him, nobody to care one way or the other, or——

Only this girl at his side.

He looked at her wonderingly, now that he came to think of her. The thin, insignificant figure, the pale face, the drooping blonde hair lying demurely on the cheeks, the bright steel-blue eyes, the pussycat purr——

"How absurd you are, Monsieur Jean, with that awful face! One would think it was because of the prospect of my dinner!"

"I am thinking of you," he said.

"Oh, thanks, monsieur! And so savagely—I have fear!"

She laughed gleefully, and affected to move away from him, only, at that instant, the hind wheel of the voiture struck a stray bowlder, and the shock threw her bodily back against him.

Both laughed now.

"It is provoking," she said.

"It is the fatality," said he.

And he put his arm about her slender form and held her there without protest.

"I was thinking of you, mon enfant," he continued, "and of what a dear, good little thing you are. Mademoiselle, you are an angel!"

"Ah! no, monsieur!" she answered, in a voice that trembled a little,—"do not believe it! I'm a devil!"

It is easy for a man in deep trouble to accept the first sympathetic woman as something angelic. And now, in his gratitude, it was perhaps natural that Jean should unhesitatingly supply Mlle. Fouchette with wings. He had humbled himself in the dust, from which point of view all virtues look beautiful and all good actions partake of heaven. His response to her self-depreciation was a human one. He drew her closer and kissed her lips.

In this he deceived neither himself nor the girl. She knew quite as well as he where his heart was. It was

a kiss of gratitude and of good-will, and was received as such without affectation. In his masculine egotism, however, he quite overlooked any possible good or ill to her in the matter,—his consideration began and ended in the gratification of her conduct towards him. And he would have been cold indeed not to feel the friendly glow which answers so eloquently the touch of womanly gentleness and sympathy.

As for Mlle. Fouchette, it must be admitted that this platonic caress created in her maidenly bosom a nervous thrill of pleasure not quite consistent in a young woman known to give the "savate" to young gentlemen who approached such familiarity, and who plumed herself on her invulnerability to the masculine wiles that beset her sex. And what might have been deemed still more foreign to her nature, she never said a word from that moment until the voiture drew up in front of her place of residence in the venerable but not venerated Rue St. Jacques.

"Voilà!" she then exclaimed, though it had not the tone of entire satisfaction.

"Hold on, little one, I will pay——"

But he discovered that those who had cared for him had also benevolently relieved him of his valuables. He had not a sou.

"The wretches!" cried the girl.

"They might have left me my keys, at least," he muttered.

"And your watch, monsieur?" she asked, apprehensively.

"Gone, of course!"

"Oh, the miserable cowards!"

He was less moved than she at the loss. It seemed trifling by the side of his other misfortunes.

But the coachman was interested. He carefully noted the number of the house again, and when she passed up his fare looked into her face with a knowing leer.

"If monsieur wishes to go back to the Préfecture," he said to her, tentatively.

"Oh, no!" said Jean.

The girl, however, understood the significance of this inquiry, and coldly demanded the man's number.

"If Mademoiselle Fouchette should need you again," she added, putting the slip in her pocket, "she will know where to find you."

And to the manifest astonishment of the cabman, who could not divine what a woman of Rue St. Jacques would want with a man without money, or at least valuables, she slipped her arm through Jean's and entered the house.

The shaded lamp turned low threw a dim light over a little table simply but neatly set for two in Mlle. Fouchette's chamber. A cold cut of beef, some delicate slices of boiled tongue, an open box of sardines, a plate heaped with cold red cabbage, a lemon, olives, etc.,—all fresh from the rôtisserie and charcuterie below,—were flanked by a mètre of bread and a litre of Bordeaux. The spread looked quite appetizing and formidable.

Absorbed as he was in himself, Jean could not but note the certainty implied in all of this preparation. Mlle. Fouchette could not have known that he would be at liberty, yet she had arranged things exactly as if

she had possessed this foreknowledge. If they had not made a mistake and let him off so easily——

"You were, then, sure I would come?"

"Very sure," said she, without turning from the small mirror where she readjusted her hair.

"Now, Monsieur Jean," she began, in a nervous, business-like way, suiting the action to the word, "I'm the doctor. You are to do just as I tell you. First you take this good American whiskey, then you lie down—here—there—that way,—voilà!"

"But——"

"No!" putting her delicate hand over his mouth gently,—"you are not to talk, you know."

He stretched himself at full length on the low couch without another protest. She brought a towel and basin and, removing the collar which had been twisted into a dirty rope, bathed his face and neck. She saw the red imprint of fingers on his throat with mingled hatred and commiseration; but she said nothing, only pressing the wet towel to the spot tenderly. In the place of the collar she put a piece of soft flannel saturated with cologne, and passed a silk scarf around the neck to hold it there. With comb and brush she softly smoothed out his hair, half toying with the locks about the temples, and perching her little head this way and that, as if to more accurately study the effect.

"Ah! now that looks better. Monsieur is beginning to look civilized."

She carefully pinned the ends of the scarf down over the shirt-front to hide the blood that was there.

All of this with a hundred exclamations and little comments and questions that required no answers, and

broken sentences of pity, of raillery, of pleasure, that had no beginning and no ending as grammatical constructions.

Purr, purr, purr.

Finally she rubbed his shoes till they shone, and flecked the dust from his clothes,—to complete which operation it was necessary for him to get up.

A slight noise on the landing caused him to start nervously.

He was still thinking of one thing,—of a man lying cold and stiff at the Hôtel Dieu.

Both carefully avoided the subject uppermost in either mind,—Henri Lerouge and his sister.

First, she was astonished that he had not questioned her; next, she sought to escape questioning altogether. She was secretive by nature. And now, like a contrite and wretched woman conscious of her share of responsibility for a great wrong, she could only humble herself before him and await his will.

"Now, Monsieur Jean," she concluded, "we will eat. Come! You must be hungry,—come! À table, monsieur!"

"Au contraire, I feel as if I could never eat again," he said, desperately.

"What nonsense! Come, monsieur,—sit down here and eat something! You will feel better at once."

"Oh, you do not know! you cannot know!" he groaned, reseating himself and taking his head between his hands. "It is too horrible! horrible!"

"Why, monsieur! What is it? Are you, then, hurt within? Say! Do you suffer? How foolish I have been! I should have brought a doctor!"

She was kneeling in front of him in her genuine alarm. "Where is it, Monsieur Jean? Where is the pain? Tell me! Tell me, then, monsieur!"

"No! no! it is not that, my child! It is here! here! here!" He struck his breast at every word, and bowed his head with abject grief.

She was silent, thinking only of his hapless love. There was no word for that!

"Ah! if it were only that! If it had been me instead of him!"

"Monsieur! My poor Monsieur Jean! You must not give way thus!"

"I am not fit to sit at the table with you, mademoiselle! My hands are red with blood! Do not touch them! Understand? Red!"

"But you are crazy, monsieur!"

"No! I am—I am simply a *murderer!* Do you hear? A MURDERER!"

He whispered it with awful solemnity.

Mlle. Fouchette, now thoroughly frightened, recoiled from him. He was mad!

"That's right!" he cried. "That's right, mademoiselle! I'm not fit to touch you! No wonder you shrink from me! For I have blood on my hands,—his blood,—understand?—my friend's! Lerouge dead! dead! And by me!"

"What's that?" she demanded. "Lerouge dead? Nonsense! It is not so! Who told you that? I say it is not true!"

He seized her almost fiercely,—

"Not dead? Her brother not dead? Say it again! Give me some hope!" he pleaded, pitifully.

"I tell you again it is not so! I saw one who knows but a few minutes before I met you!"

He sank on his knees at her feet and kissed her hands, now trembling with excitement.

"Again!" he exclaimed.

"It is as true as God!" said she. "And he is doing well!"

He took her in his arms passionately, pouring out the thankfulness of his soul in kisses and loving caresses, sobbing like a child. They mingled their tears, —the blessed tears of joy and sympathy!

For a long time they rested thus, immobile, with thoughts too deep for expression,—in a sacred silence broken only by sighs. Then when the calm was complete she softly disengaged herself in saying, "And *she* is there, Jean," as if completing the sentence long before begun. But it required an effort.

He answered by a pressure of the hand. That was all.

"And now, then, monsieur," she observed, abruptly and with playful satire, "I'm going to eat. I'm sorry you are not hungry, but——"

"Eat? Little one," he joyously cried, "I can eat a house and lot!" He took her bodily between his hands, he who a moment before had been so weak, and tossed her as one plays with a child.

"For shame! There is no house here for you, but I've got a lot to eat! There! No more of that, Monsieur Jean, or you shall have no supper!"

As he threatened her again with his exuberant spirits, she wisely but laughingly put the table between

them. But she looked a world of happiness from her eyes.

From the extreme of mental depression Jean Marot was thus suddenly transported to the extreme of happiness and hopefulness. Simply because the life of the man whom he would have done to death, in his insane jealousy of a successful rival, had become precious, priceless, as that of the brother of his beloved. The conditions were desperate enough as they were. To have slain her brother would not only have rendered them hopeless, it would have condemned the survivor to a lifetime of remorse, unless, indeed, that life had not been happily shortened by the guillotine.

So they laughed, talked, ate, drank, and made merry, these two, taking no thought of the morrow until both the supper and the time necessary to dispose of it were consumed.

Jean lighted a cigarette that she gave him, and threw himself on the couch. Meanwhile, the girl, with the assistance of Poupon, got some hot water and washed the dishes, putting them one by one carefully back on the shelves in the wall. Finally the empty bottle found its place under the couch.

Then she discovered that Jean was sleeping soundly. He had succumbed in spite of rattling dishes and her talk, and slept the heavy sleep of physical exhaustion. The cigarette had fallen from his fingers half finished. His throat was still muffled in her silken scarf, but she tried to see if the marks were still there. For fully a minute she remained standing over him, buried in

thought. The old clock in the Henri IV. tower behind the Panthéon chimed eleven. She sighed.

"Very well!" she murmured. "Monsieur is right. He has no money, no keys, and he is weary. He shall rest where he is. C'est égal!"

With this philosophical reflection she immediately began preparation for retiring on her own account, completing this as if the monsieur snoring on the couch had no material existence.

"Voilà!" said she, when she had drawn her curtains.

And in two minutes more she was as oblivious to the world as was Jean Marot.

CHAPTER XV

It would not be easy to define the sentiments or state the expectations of Mlle. Fouchette. Whatever they were, she would have been unable to formulate them herself.

Mlle. Fouchette was simply and insensibly conforming to her manner of life. She was drifting. She did not know where. She never thought of towards what end or to what purpose.

Those who know woman best never assume to reduce her to the logical rules which govern the mathematical mind, but are always prepared for the little eccentricities which render her at once so charming and uncertain. The Frenchwoman perhaps carries this uncertainty to a higher state of perfection than her sex of any other nationality.

That Mlle. Fouchette was the possessor of that indefinable something people call heart had never been so much as suspected by those with whom she had come in intimate contact. It had certainly never inconvenienced her up to this time. To have gone to her for sympathy would have been deemed absurd. Even in her intense enjoyment of "la vie joyeuse" her natural coldness did not endear her to those who shared her society for the moment. As a reigning favorite of the Bohemian set she would have earned the dislike of her sex; but this was greatly accentuated by her repute as an honest girl. The worst of these "filles du quartier" observed the proprieties, were sticklers for the forms of respectability. And Mlle. Fouchette,

who was really good, trampled upon everything and everybody that stood in her way.

As to her income from the studios, bah! and again bah!

Then what was Mlle. Fouchette?

That was the universal feminine inquiry.

Mlle. Fouchette appeared to Jean Marot in a vaguely kaleidoscopic way as a woman of no account possessing good points. Sometimes she appeared to be cold, sly, vicious, and wholly unconscionable; again, good-hearted, self-sacrificing, sympathetic. But he did not bother about her particularly, though he covertly watched her this morning preparing breakfast. It was true, her blonde hair did not look as if it had been touched by comb or brush, that she wore pantoufles that exposed holes in the heels of her stockings, that her wrapper was soiled and gaped horribly between buttons on and off its frontage; but, then, what woman is perfect before breakfast?

All this did not seriously detract from the fact that she had gone out of her way to look after him the day before. Nor did it explain that she had this morning invested herself with these slovenly belongings, taken in the demi-litre of milk that ornamented her door-knob, gone down into the street for additional "petits pains," added a couple of eggs "à la coque" to the usual morning menu, set Poupon to work on the café-au-lait, and was now putting the finishing touches to her little table in anticipation of the appetite of her awaking guest.

"Bonjour, my little housekeeper."

"Ah! bonjour, Monsieur Jean. Have you rested

well? What a lazy man! You look well this morning, monsieur."

"Oh, yes; and why not, mon enfant?" said he, straightening up somewhat stiffly.

"And your poor bones?" she laughingly inquired, referring to the improvised couch. "It is not a comfortable bed for one like monsieur."

"It is luxury unspeakable compared to the bed I had anticipated early last evening. I never slept better in all my life."

"Good!" said she.

"And I'm hungry."

"Better!" said she. "Here is a clean towel and here is water," showing him her modest toilet arrangement, "and here is petite Poupon scolding——"

"'Poupon'?" 'scolding'?"

"Yes, monsieur. Have you, then, forgotten poor little Poupon? For shame!" With mock indignation.

She took the small blue teakettle, which had already begun to "scold," and, stooping over the hearth, made the coffee. She then dropped the two eggs in the same teakettle and consulted the clock.

"Hard or soft?" she asked.

"Minute and a half," he replied in the folds of the towel.

She was pouring the coffee back through the strainer in order to get the full strength of it, though it already looked as black as tar and strong enough to float an iron wedge. At the same time she saw him before her glass attentively examining the marks on his throat, now even more distinctly red than on

the night before. But she knew instinctively that his thoughts were not of his own, but of another neck.

Breakfast was not the lively repast of the previous evening. In the best of circumstances breakfast is a pessimistic meal. The world never looks the same as it appeared at yesterday's dinner.

Jean had risen to a falling barometer. The first ebullition of joy at having been spared the slaughter of his friend and the brother of the girl he loved had passed and the real future stared him in the face. He began to entertain doubts as to whether a single glance from a pair of blue eyes was a solid foundation for the magnificent edifice he had erected thereon. But Jean Marot was intensely egoist and was prone to regard that which he wanted as already his.

Mlle. Fouchette was facing the same question on her own account,—a fact which she concealed from both as far as possible by making herself believe it was his affair exclusively. As it is always easier to grapple with the difficulties of others than with our own, she soon found means to encourage her illusion.

"Mademoiselle?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"You are not at all a woman——"

"What, then, monsieur, if I am not——"

"Wait! I mean not at all like other women," he hastily interposed.

"Par exemple?"

"Because, first, you have not once said 'I told you so,'—not reproached me for disregarding your advice."

"No? But that would be unnecessary. You are punished. Next?"

"Well, you let me remain here."

"Why not?"

She opened the steel-blue eyes on him sharply,—so sharply, in fact, that Jean Marot either could not just then remember why not or that he did not care to say. But she relieved him of that embarrassment very quickly.

"If you mean that I should be afraid of you, monsieur, or that I would have thought for a moment——"

"Oh! no, no, no! I do not mean that, of course. It was the fear women have of others——"

"What do I care for 'others'!" she snapped, scornfully. "Pray, Monsieur Jean, are there, then, 'others' who care anything about me? No! Ask them. No! I do what I please. And I account to nobody. Understand? Nobody!"

Mlle. Fouchette brought the small, thin white hand down upon the table with a slap that gave sufficient assurance of her sincerity, at the same time giving a happy idea of her immeasurable contempt for society.

"But, my dear Mademoiselle Fouchette, I, at least, care for you,—only——"

"Là, là, là! Only you don't care quite enough, Monsieur Jean, to take my advice," she interrupted. "Is not that it?"

"If I don't I shall be the loser, I'm afraid," he replied, lugubriously.

"And then I should be sorry."

"Why?"

"Why not?"

"Because I am not worthy of it. Now answer me."

"Well, because it pleases me," she responded, with a smile. "You know what I said but a moment ago? I do what I please and account to nobody."

"Very well. Now, does it please your Supreme Highness to continue to shower the blessing of your royal favor upon me?"

"For to-day, perhaps; if you obey my imperious will, monsieur."

He prolonged the comedy by kneeling on one knee and saying humbly, "I am your most obedient subject. Command!"

"Bring me my clothes, monsieur."

"Er—wha-at? clothes?" he stammered.

"I said clothes,—on the bed there. Lay them out on the couch, please."

He found her simple wardrobe of the previous day on the bed—the skirt, the little bolero, the hat with the feather—and laid them out on the couch one by one with mock care and ceremony.

"There!"

"Shake them out, monsieur."

"Yes, your Highness."

She was putting away the last breakfast things when she heard an exclamation.

"Red!" said he. "And beard, too, as I'm a sinner!"

He had found a tuft of red beard twisted in the fastening of the bolero. The expression on his face would have defied words. As for Mlle. Fouchette, she was for a moment of the same color of the telltale hair. For some reason she did not wish Jean to know

of her part in the riot. At the same time she was angry with herself for the womanly feeling of delicacy that surged into her cheeks.

"Where did you get it?" he asked, quizzically.

"Monsieur! Go away!"

"I didn't know you'd been decorated, mademoiselle, —really,—Legion of Honor, too!"

"Bah! I must have given some man a good pull in the crowd," said she. "How provoking!"

"For him, doubtless, yes."

"To return to your affairs, Monsieur Jean," she said, grabbing the garments and proceeding to put them on with that insouciance begotten of studio life. "Have you any money?"

"With me? Not a sou!"

She slipped her hand down her neck and drew forth a small bag held there by a string and took from it a coin, which she tendered him.

"Here is a louis,—you may repay it when you can."

"Thank you, my child. But it is not necessary. I can get some money at the Crédit Lyonnais."

"But, monsieur, you can't walk there! And we will be busy to-day."

"Oh, we will be busy, will we?"

"Yes,—unless you rebel," she replied, significantly.

"At least, your Highness will let me know——"

"First, we must go and find out how Lerouge is——"

"Good!"

"Next, see an agent about your place. You are to sell your lease, you know, and furniture——"

"And furniture,—very well. After?"

"And then we must find you a new place,—cheaper, don't you know?"

"A good deal cheaper," he said.

"In this quarter they are cheapest."

"Then let it be in the quarter."

"Voilà! Now that's all right." A remark which may have equally applied to his affairs or to the putting on of her shoes.

"A very simple appartement will serve," he observed, when she sounded him on his idea of cheapness.

"There is a lovely one de garçon next door to me, but it is dear. It is a little parlor, bedroom, and kitchen. And this is a quiet house, monsieur."

"Good! I like quietude, and——"

"Oh, it is a very quiet place," she assured him.

"This appartement,—dining-room?"

"No! What does a man alone want with a dining-room? Let him eat in the parlor."

"Yes, that would be luxury," he admitted.

"One doesn't need the earth in order to eat and sleep."

"N-no; but how much is this luxury of the Rue St. Jacques?" he inquired.

"It is four hundred francs, I believe." She heaved a sigh of regret. It seemed a large sum of money to Mlle. Fouchette.

"Four hundred a year? Only four hundred a year! Parbleu! And now what can one get for four hundred a year, ma petite Fouchette?"

"S-sh! monsieur,—a good deal!" she exclaimed, smiling at his naïveté. With all his patronizing airs she instinctively felt that this man who treated her as

if she were a child was really a provincial who needed both mother and business agent.

"I'd like to see it, anyhow," said he.

"At once, monsieur,—so you shall; but it is dear, four hundred francs, when you might get the same at Montrouge for two hundred and fifty francs. Here,—I have the key,—le voilà!"

It was the appartement of three rooms next door to her chamber, which seemed to have been cut off from it as something superfluous in the Rue St. Jacques.

"Why—and Monsieur de Beauchamp is——"

"Gone."

"Yesterday?"

"Yesterday afternoon,—yes. Quite sudden, was it not?"

She said this as though it was of no importance.

"The huissier?" he suggested, official ejectment being the most common cause of student troubles.

She laughed secretively.

"The police?"

Then she laughed openly—her pretty little silvery tinkle—and drew his attention to the kitchen.

It was a small dark place with a much-worn tile floor and a charcoal range of two pockets faced and covered with blue and white tiles; an immense hood above yawning like the flat open jaws of a gigantic cobra, which might not only consume all the smoke and smells but gobble up the little tile-covered range itself upon gastronomical provocation.

"Isn't it just lovely!" exclaimed Mlle. Fouchette, delightedly. "And see! here is a stone sink, and there's water and gas."

Water and gas are still deemed luxuries in the more ancient quarters of Paris. As for baths, they are for the rich,—even the more modern structures are parsimonious of baths. You realize all this when in a close omnibus, or smell some well-dressed Parisienne ten feet away. When one of the dwellers of Rue St. Jacques takes a bath a battered old tub is brought around on a wagon and unloaded in the court with a noise and ceremony that arouses the entire neighborhood, which puts its head out of the window and wonders who is going to be married.

"And here's a private closet, too," continued Mlle. Fouchette,—"everything! But that sweet little stove! I could cook a course dinner on that!"

"Oh, you could, eh?" inquired Jean. "Then you shall."

"Surely!" said the girl, as if it were settled from the first. "Besides, it is so much more economical for two than one."

"Oh, is it?" he replied, doubtfully.

"Of course, if one lives at expensive restaurants. And in bad weather or when one feels grumpy——"

They looked at the large bedroom and small anteroom, or toilet-room adjoining, which Mlle. Fouchette declared was good enough for a lord, inspected the closets, commented on the excellent condition of the polished floors and newly papered walls, and finally decided that it really was a good deal for the money.

"It could be made a little paradise," said she, enthusiastically.

"Needing the angels," he suggested.

"Possibly; but one can get along very comfortably without them."

"But I wonder why M. de Beauchamp, installed here so comfortably day before yesterday, should be missing to-day. There must be some drawback here——"

"Oh, no. The truth is, M. de Beauchamp thought he saw—in fact, M. de Beauchamp did see visions. In one of these he was foretold of a possible difference of opinion between himself and the government; about something that was to have happened yesterday and didn't happen——"

"Did not happen. Go on."

"There, Monsieur Jean," she concluded, "that is all. Only, you see, M. de Beauchamp's arrangements having been made, he probably thought he might as well disappear——"

"And his studio with him."

"Precisely. Look what a nice big closet in the wall!"

"Yes,—funny. But, I say, mon enfant, was this handsome M. de Beauchamp really an artist?"

"Bah! how do I know? He made pictures. Certainly, he made pictures."

Jean Marot laughed so heartily at this subtle distinction that he lost the mental note of her disinclination to gossip about her late neighbor,—a reluctance that is decidedly foreign to the French female character.

"Now, Monsieur Jean,"—when he had made up his mind,—"if you will let me manage the concierge,"

she went on, "it may save you fifty francs, don't you know? Very likely the term has been paid,—he will make you pay it again. I know Monsieur Benoit,—he'd rob you like saying a prayer."

"It is a novelty to be looked after by a female agent, anyhow," mused the young man, when she had disappeared on this mission. "If she picks up the fifty francs instead of that surly rascal Benoit I'm satisfied. It is a quiet place, sure, and dog cheap. Now, I wonder what her game is, for women don't do all of these things for nothing."

Jean was of the great pessimistic school of Frenchmen who never give a woman credit for disinterestedness or honesty, but who regard them good-naturedly as inferior beings, amusing, weak, selfish creatures, placed on earth to gratify masculine vanity and passion,—to be admired or pitied, as the case might be, but never trusted, and always fair game. The married Frenchman never trusts his wife or daughter alone with his best male friend. No young girl alone in the streets of Paris is free from insult, day or night; and such a girl in such a case would appeal to the honor of Frenchmen in vain.

Jean Marot would have never dreamed that Mlle. Fouchette had saved him from imprisonment. Even in his magnanimous moments he would have listened to the accusation that this girl had robbed him of his money and watch quite as readily as to the statement that she had already taken measures to insure the recovery of that personal property. Yet, while his estimate of woman was low, it did not prevent him from loving one whom he had believed another man's mis-

tress; it did not now steel his heart against the sympathy of mutual isolation.

"All goes well!" cried Mlle. Fouchette, skipping into the room.

"All goes well, eh?" he repeated.

"Yes, Monsieur Jean. Think then! it is a bargain. Oh, yes, one hundred francs——"

"What?"

"I say one hundred francs saved! The semestre was paid and you get it less a term's rent, thus you save one hundred francs. Isn't that nice? One can live two months on one hundred francs."

"Oh! oh! oh! not I," he laughingly exclaimed. "But I guess I'd better let you manage, little one; you have begun so well."

Her face almost flushed with pleasure and her eyes sparkled.

"And you shall have fifty of that hundred francs saved. It is only fair, petite," he hastily added, seeing the brightness extinguished by clouds.

But she turned abruptly towards the window. He mistook this gesture and said to himself, "She would like to have it all, I suppose. I'd better make a square bargain with her right here." Then aloud,—

"Mademoiselle Fouchette!"

"Yes, monsieur,"—coldly.

"What is your idea?"

"As to what, Monsieur Jean?"

"Well, say about our domestic affairs, if you will."

"Well, monsieur, very simply this: I will care for the place if you wish,—somebody must care for it——"

"Yes, that is evident, and I wish you to help me, if you will."

"Then I'll serve the breakfasts and any other meal you wish to pay for. In other words, if you prefer it in terms, I will be your housekeeper. I can cook, and I'm a good buyer and——"

"No doubt of that, mon enfant; but I am a poor man now, you know, and the pay——"

"Pay! And who has asked you to pay anything? Do you suppose—ah! Monsieur Jean, you don't think me that!"

"But one can't be expected to work for nothing," protested the young man, humbly.

"Work? It would be pleasure. And then you would be paying for what we ate, wouldn't you? I have to make my coffee,—it would be just as easy for two. And you would be perfectly free to dine at the restaurant when you chose,—we'd be as free as we are now,—and I would not intrude——"

"Oh, I never thought of that!" he declared.

"Do not spoil my pleasure by suggesting money!" Her voice was growing low and the lips trembled a little, but only for a second or two, when she recovered her ordinary tone.

"As a rich man's son living in the Faubourg St. Honoré you might have suspected that motive, but as a medical student chassé, and deserted by his parents and with no prospects to speak of——"

His lugubrious smile checked her.

"Pardon! Monsieur Jean, I did not wish to remind you of your misfortunes. Let us put it on purely selfish grounds. I am poor. I am alone. I am lonely.

I should at least earn my coffee and rolls. I would see you every day. My time would be pleasantly occupied. I will be a sister,—bonne camarade,—nothing more, nothing less——"

He had taken her hands impulsively, but her eyes were veiled by the heavy lashes.

"Voilà! It is then understood?" she asked, venturing to look up into his face.

"Certes! But your terms are too generous,—and—and, you know the object of my heart, mademoiselle."

"Toujours! And I will help you attain that object if possible," she said, warmly, pressing his hand.

"You are too good, mademoiselle," he responded. "Next to one woman I think you are the best woman I ever knew!"

He took her in his strong arms and kissed her tenderly, though she struggled faintly.

"Enough! enough! You must not do that, monsieur! I do not like it. Remember how I hate men, spoony men,—they disgust me! As a woman I can be nothing to you; as a friend I may be much. Save your caresses, monsieur, for the woman you love! You understand?"

"There! no offence, little one. Am I not your brother?" he asked, laughing.

She nervously readjusted her blonde hair before the little glass and did not reply. But it was evident that she was not very angry, for Mlle. Fouchette was explosive and went off at a rude touch.

At the same moment a terrible racket rose from the stairway,—the sound of a woman's voice and blows and the howling of a dog. Leaning over the banister

the young couple saw a woman, short, broad, bareheaded, and angry, wielding a broom-handle. The passage was rather narrow, so that more than half of the whacks at the dog were spent upon the wall and balustrade, though the animal, lashed to the latter, yelped at every blow the same.

Now, in Paris a dog is a sort of a privileged animal, not quite sacred. Rome was saved by geese, pigeons are venerated in Venice. Dogs preserved Paris in the fearful day of the great siege by suffering themselves to be turned into soups, steaks, sausage, etc. Since which Paris has become the dog paradise, where all good dogs go when they die. They not only have the right of way everywhere, but the exclusive right of the sunny sidewalks in winter and shady side in summer. A Frenchman will beat his wife, or stab his mistress in the back, club his horses fiendishly, but he will never raise hand or foot against a dog.

From every landing came a burst of remonstrance and indignation. Vituperative language peculiar to a neighborhood that has enjoyed the intimate society of two thousand years of accumulated human wisdom and intellectual greatness, and embellished and decorated by the old masters, rose and fell upon the sinful dog-beater, with the effect of increasing the blows.

Suddenly three persons sprang to the rescue, two from below and one from above. The last was a woman and the owner of the dog.

"Mon Dieu! My dear little Tu-tu!" she screamed.

And with a howl of wrath that drowned the piercing voice of poor little Tu-tu she precipitated herself upon the enemy.

The latter turned her weapon upon the new-comer just as the two men from below grabbed her. This diversion enabled the infuriated dog-owner to plant both hands in the enemy's hair, which came off at the first wrench.

"Oh!" cried Jean.

"It is horrible!" said Mlle. Fouchette, with a shudder.

From where they beheld the tragedy they could not see that the hair was false.

But the dog-beater was just as angry as if it had been ripped from its original and virgin pasture, and she uttered a shriek that was heard around the block and grappled her three assailants.

The whole four, a struggling composite mass of legs and arms, went rolling down to the next landing surrounded by a special and lurid atmosphere of oaths.

There they were arrested by the aroused police agents.

Poor little Tu-tu had stopped howling. He was dead,—crushed under the human avalanche.

"Yes," said Jean, "this *is* a quiet house."

"Dame!" replied Mlle. Fouchette, "it is like death!"

CHAPTER XVI

An hour later Jean Marot and Mlle. Fouchette were at the foot of the broad stone steps leading to the Hôtel Dieu, the famous hospital fronting on the plaza of Notre Dame.

"I will wait," he said.

"Yes; I will inquire," she assented. "I was here last night." And Mlle. Fouchette ran lightly up the steps and entered the palatial court.

Another woman was hastily walking in the opposite direction. She bent her head and quickened her steps as if to avoid recognition.

"Why, it is Madeleine!" cried Mlle. Fouchette, throwing herself in the way.

A face stamped with the marks of dissipation and haggard with watching was raised to meet this greeting. The one big, round, dark orb gleamed upon the speaker almost fiercely.

"So you're here again," muttered the one-eyed grisette, in her deep voice.

"It seems so. I wish to find out how he is."

"What business is it of yours?"

"Oh, come, now, Madeleine; you're all upset. You look worn out. You have been here all night?"

"Ah, çà! it is nothing. Have I not been up all night more than once?"

"And monsieur——"

"They say he is better."

"You have seen him, then?"

"No; they would not allow me. Besides, there is his sister."

"Is she with him now?"

"Not now. They sent her away in the night. She will be back this morning."

"Poor girl!"

"But what is all this to you? Why are you here? Does the Ministry——"

"Madeleine!"

But the tigerish look that swept over Mlle. Fouchette's face gave way to confusion when the grisette quickly shifted her ground.

"Monsieur Marot, I suppose."

"Yes, Madeleine."

"And so he has thrown her over for you, eh?" the other bitterly asked, with a contemptuous shrug of her shoulders.

"Oh! no, no, no!" hastily protested Mlle. Fouchette, trembling a little in spite of herself. "That would be impossible! He is so sorry, Madeleine."

"Sorry! Yes, and the wicked marks on his throat, mon Dieu!"

"Are on Jean's also, Madeleine," said Mlle. Fouchette. "Let us set these friends right, Madeleine. Will you? Let them be friends once more."

The one dark eye had been searching, searching. For the ears heard a voice they had never heard before. It came from the lips of Mlle. Fouchette, but was not the familiar voice of Mlle. Fouchette. But the search was vain.

"Ah! very well, petite," the searcher finally said, with a sigh. "Their quarrel is not mine. I have not set these men on to tear each other like wild beasts."

Mlle. Fouchette turned her face away. But the veins on her white neck were as plain as print.

They were read by the simple-hearted grisette thus: It could only be love or hate; since it is not hate, it is love! Lerouge or Marot?

"Mademoiselle!"

The other turned a defiant face towards the speaker.

"You know that a reconciliation between these men means——"

"That Jean Marot will be thrown into the arms of the woman he loves," was the bold interpolation.

"Exactly."

"That is what I wish."

The dark eye gleamed again, and the breast heaved. It must be Lerouge! Jealousy places the desirability of its subject above everything. It must be Lerouge.

"Chut! Here she comes," whispered Mlle. Fouchette.

It was Mlle. Remy. She was clad in a simple blue costume, the skirt of which cleared the ground by several inches, her light blonde hair puffing out in rich coils from beneath the sailor hat. Her sad blue eyes lighted at the sight of Madeleine, and her face broke into a questioning smile as she extended her small hand.

"Oh, Monsieur Lerouge is much better, mademoiselle," said Madeleine.

"Thank you!—thank you for your good news, my dear," Mlle. Remy warmly replied.

She turned towards Mlle. Fouchette a little nervously, and Madeleine introduced them.

"It is strange, Mademoiselle Fouchette," observed Mlle. Remy; "could I have met you before?"

"I think not, mademoiselle. One meets people on the boulevards——"

"No, I don't mean that,—a long time ago, somewhere,—not in Paris."

Mlle. Remy was trying to think.

"Perhaps you confuse me with somebody else, mademoiselle."

"Scarcely, since I do not remember seing anybody who resembled you. No, it is not that, surely."

"One often fancies——"

"But my brother Henri thought so too, which is very curious. May I ask you if your name——"

"Just Fouchette, mademoiselle. I never heard of any other——"

"I am from Nantes," interrupted Mlle. Remy. "Think!"

"And I am only a child of the streets of Paris, mademoiselle," said Mlle. Fouchette, humbly.

"Ah!"

Mlle. Remy sighed.

"Mademoiselle Fouchette and Monsieur Marot have come to learn the news of your brother," said Madeleine, seeing the latter approaching.

Jean Marot had, in fact, followed Mlle. Remy inside of the building, but having been overtaken by timidity for the first time in his life, had hesitated at a little distance in the rear. He could stand the suspense no longer.

"Monsieur Marot, Mademoiselle——"

"Oh, we have met before, monsieur, have we not?"

asked Mlle. Remy, lightly. "I thank you very much for——"

Jean felt his heart beating against the ribbed walls of its prison as if it would burst forth to attest its love for her. He had often conjured up this meeting and rehearsed what he would say to her. Now his lips were dumb. He could only look and listen.

And this was she whom he loved!

In the mean time Mlle. Remy, who had flushed a little under the intense scrutiny she felt but could not understand, grew visibly uneasy. She detected a sign from Mlle. Fouchette.

He had unconsciously disclosed the telltale marks upon his neck.

At the sight Mlle. Remy grew pale. There was much about this young man that recalled her brother Henri, even these terrible finger-marks. All at once she remembered the meeting of Mardi Gras, when her brother insulted him and pulled her away.

Why?

It was because this young Marot admired her, and because he and her brother were enemies. She saw it now for the first time. Paris was full of political enemies. Yet, in awe of her brother's judgment and like a well-bred French girl, she dared not raise her eyes to his,—with the half-minute of formalities she hurried away. But as she turned she gave him one quick glance that combined politeness, shyness, fear, curiosity, and pity,—a glance that went straight to his heart and increased its tumult.

A pair of sharp, steel-blue eyes regarded him furtively, and, while half veiled by the long lashes, lost

not a breath or gesture of this meeting and parting,—saw Jean standing, hat in hand, partly bowed, speechless, with his soul in his handsome face.

The one black eye of the maimed grisette saw only Mlle. Fouchette. If that scrutiny could not fathom Mlle. Fouchette's mind, it was perhaps because the mind of Mlle. Fouchette was not sufficiently clear.

"Allons!" said the latter young woman, in a tone that scarcely broke his revery.

There is often more expression in a simple touch than in a multitude of words. The unhappy grisette felt this from the sympathetic hand of the young man slipped into hers at parting. At a little distance she turned to see Jean and Mlle. Fouchette enter a cab and drive towards the right bank.

"Çà!" she murmured, "but if that petite moucharde had a heart it would be his!"

During the next half-hour Mlle. Fouchette unconsciously gained greatly in Jean's estimation by saying nothing. They went to the Crédit Lyonnais, in Boulevard des Italiens, to Rue St. Honoré, to the "agent de location,"—getting money, taking a list of furniture, seeing about the sale of his lease. In all of this business Mlle. Fouchette showed such a clear head and quick calculation that from first being amused, Jean at last leaned upon her implicitly.

The next day was spent in arranging his new quarters, Mlle. Fouchette issuing general direction, to the constant discomfiture of the worthy Benoit, thus deprived of unknown perquisites.

When this work of installation had been completed, Jean found himself with comfortable quarters in the

Rue St. Jacques at a saving of nearly two thousand four hundred francs.

"There!" exclaimed Mlle. Fouchette.

"At last!" said Jean.

"Now," Mlle. Fouchette began, with enthusiasm, "I'm going to get dinner!"

"Oh, not to-day! Allons donc! We must celebrate by dinner at the restaurant."

"But it's a sinful waste of money, when one has such a sweet range,—and you must economize, monsieur."

"All right," he replied,—"to-morrow."

It is a popular plan of economy, that which begins to-morrow.

"Yes, to-morrow; to-morrow you shall have your way. To-day I have mine. Why, what a parsimonious little wretch you are! And have you not been devoting all of your time and working hard for me these five days?"

"Ah! Monsieur Jean——"

"We will treat ourselves to a good dinner au boulevard. You have been my best friend——"

"Oh, Monsieur Jean!"

"Are my best friend," he added. "I really don't see how I could have gotten on without you."

"Ah! Monsieur Jean!"

"You have saved me hundreds of francs,—you are such a good little manager!"

Nothing up to that moment had ever given Mlle. Fouchette half the pleasure bestowed with this praise. Mlle. Fouchette blushed. Jean saw this blush and laughed. It was so funny to see Mlle. Fouchette

blush. This made Mlle. Fouchette blush still deeper. In fact, it seemed as if all the warm blood that had been concealed in Mlle. Fouchette's system so long had taken an upward tendency and now disported itself about her neck and face.

Jean would have kissed her, only she repulsed him angrily; then, seeing his surprise and confusion, she covered her face with her hands and laughed hysterically.

"Mademoiselle——"

"Stop, stop, stop! I knew what you were going to say! It was money again!"

"Really, mademoiselle——"

"It was! You did! You know you did! And you know how I hate it! Don't you dare to offer me money, because I love——" Mlle. Fouchette choked here a little,—"because I love to help you, Monsieur Jean!"

"But I was not thinking of offering you money for your kindness, mon enfant." Jean took this play for safety as genuine wrath.

"You were going to; you know you were!" she retorted, defiantly.

"Well, I suppose I may offer to repay the louis I borrowed the other day?"

"Oh, yes! I'll make you pay your debts, monsieur, —never fear that!"

She began to recover her equilibrium, and smiled confidently in his face. But he was now serious.

"There are some debts one can never pay," said he.

"Never! never! never!" she exclaimed. "Monsieur, whatever I might do, I owe you still! It will always be so!"

"Uh! Uh! That's barred, petite."

He stopped walking up and down and looked into her earnest eyes without grasping her meaning. "She is more feminine than one would suppose," he said to himself,—"almost interesting, really!"

"Come!" he cried, suddenly, "this is straying from the subject, which is dinner. Come!"

"We'd have to do some marketing, anyhow," she admitted, as if arguing with herself. "Perhaps it is better to go out."

"Most assuredly."

"Not at any fashionable place, Monsieur Jean——"

"Oh, no; is there any such place in the quarter?" he laughingly asked.

"Can't we go over on the other side?"

"Yes, my child, certainly."

"I know a place in Montmartre where one may dine en fête for two francs and a half, café compris." She was getting on her things, and for the first time was conscious of the hole in the heel of her stocking.

"There is the Café de Paris——"

"Oh! it is five francs!" she exclaimed.

"Well, one may dine better on five francs than two and a half."

"It is too dear, Monsieur Jean."

"Then there is the Hôtel du Louvre table-d'hôte, four francs,—very good, too."

"It is too fashionable,—too many Americans."

"Parbleu! one can be an American for one meal, can he not? They say Americans live well in their own country. They have meat three times a day,—even the poorest laborers."

"And eat meat for breakfast,—it is horrible!"

"Yes,—they are savages."

After discussing the various places and finding that his ideas of a good dining-place were somewhat more enlarged than her ideas, Mlle. Fouchette finally brought him down to a Bouillon in Boule' Miche',—the student appellation for Boulevard St. Michel. She would have preferred any other quarter of the city, though not earnestly enough to stand out for it.

They settled on the Café Weber, opposite the ancient College d'Harcourt, a place of the Bouillon order, with innumerable dishes graded up from twenty centimes to a franc and an additional charge of ten centimes for the use of a napkin.

Wine aside, a better meal for less money can be had in a score of places on Broadway. In the matter of wine, the New York to the Paris price would be as a dollar to the franc.

In the Quartier Latin these places are patronized almost exclusively by the student class. Not less than fifty of the latter were at table in the Café Weber when Jean Marot and Mlle. Fouchette entered. Here and there among them were a few grisettes and as many cocottes of the Café d'Harcourt, costumes en bicyclette, demure, hungry, and silent. Young women in smart caps and white aprons briskly served the tables, while in the centre, in a sort of enclosed pulpit, sat the handsome, rosy-faced dame du comptoir, with a sharp eye for employés and a winning smile and nod for familiar customers.

There was a perceptible sensation upon the entrance of the last comers. A momentary hush was succeeded

by a general buzz of conversation, the subject of which was quite easily understood. The stately dame du comptoir immediately opened her little wicket and came down from her perch to show the couple to the best seats, a courtesy rarely extended by that impersonation of restaurant dignity. The hungry women almost stopped eating to see what man was in tow of the "Savatière."

"We are decidedly an event," laughingly observed Jean as they became seated where they could command the general crowd at table.

"Yes, monsieur," replied the dame du comptoir, though his remark had not been addressed to that lady,—"the fame of the brave Monsieur Marot is well known in the quarter. And—and mademoiselle," she added, sweetly, "mademoiselle — well, everybody knows mademoiselle."

With this under-cut at Mlle. Fouchette the rosy-cheeked cashier left them in charge of the waitress of that particular table.

"You see, Monsieur Jean," said his companion, not at all pleased by this reception, "we are both pretty well known here."

"So it seems. Yet I was never in here before, if I remember correctly."

"Nor I," said she, "but once or twice."

Notoriety is fame to Frenchmen, and while he did not yet fully comprehend it, Jean Marot had reached this sort of fame in a single day. His name had been actively and even viciously discussed in the newspapers. He was accused of being both royalist and anti-Dreyfusarde by the ultra republican press. He

was said to be a Bonapartist. The Dreyfusarde papers declared that the government had connived at his discharge from prison. The nationalist papers lauded him as a patriot. One extravagant writer compared him to the celebrated Camille Desmoulins who led the great Revolution. A noisy deputation had called upon him in the Rue St. Honoré to find that he had not been seen there since the riot.

Of all of this Jean Marot actually knew less than any other well-informed person in Paris. Being wholly absorbed in his domestic affairs, he had scarcely more than glanced at a newspaper, and did not at this moment know that his name had ever been printed in the Paris journals. The few acquaintances he had met had congratulated him for something, and some students he did not know had raised their hats to him in the streets; and once he had been saluted by a class procession with desultory cries of "Vive Marot!" Mere rioting was then too common in Paris to excite particular attention individually.

But Jean Marot had been magnified by newspaper controversy into a formidable political leader; besides which there were young men here who had followed him a few days before in the riots. Therefore he was now the cynosure of curious attention.

From admiring glances the crowd of diners quickly passed to complimentary language intended for his ears.

"He's a brave young man!" "You should have seen him that day!" "Ah, but he's a fighter, is M. Marot!" "Un bon camarade!" "He is a patriot!" etc.

These broken expressions were mingled with sly allusions to Mlle. Fouchette from the women, who were consumed by envy. They had heard of the Savatière's conquest with disbelief, now they saw it with their own eyes. The brazen thing! She was showing him off.

"She's caught on at last."

"Monsieur has more money than taste."

"Is he as rich as they say?"

"The skinny model."

"Model, bah!"

"Model for hair-pin, probably."

"The airs of that kicker!"

"He might have got a prettier mistress without trying hard."

"He'll find her a devil."

"Oh, there's no doubt about it. He has fitted up an elegant appartement for her in the Rue St. Jacques."

"Rue St. Jacques. Faugh!"

It should be unnecessary to say that these encomiums were not designed for the ears of Mlle. Fouchette, though the said ears must have burned with self-consciousness. But it may be well enough to remark that despite the spleen the object of it had risen immensely in the estimation of the female as well as the male habitués of Café Weber.

As the couple occupied a table in the extreme rear, the patrons in front found it convenient to go out by way of the Rue Champollion in order to see if not to bow to the distinguished guest.

The apparent fact that the new political leader had taken up with one of the most notorious women of the

Quartier Latin in no way detracted from their esteem for him,—rather lent an agreeable piquancy to his character. On the other hand, it raised Mlle. Fouchette to a certain degree of respectability.

These demonstrations annoyed our young gentleman very much. Nothing but this patent fact saved them from a general reception.

"It is provoking!" exclaimed his companion.

"I don't understand it at all," said he.

"I do," replied Mlle. Fouchette.

"And, see, little one, I don't like it."

"I knew you wouldn't, and that is why I suggested the right bank of the river."

"True,—I always make a mistake when I don't follow your advice. Have some more wine,—I call that good."

"It ought to be at two francs a bottle," she retorted.

"My father would call this rank poison, but it goes."

"Poor me! I never tasted any better," laughed the girl, sipping the wine with the air of a connaisseuse. "A litre à cinquante is my tipple," she said.

"Now, what the devil do all these people mean?" he asked, when a party had passed them with a slight demonstration.

"That you are famous, monsieur. I wish we had remained at home."

"So do I, petite," he said.

"Let us take our coffee there, at least," she suggested.

"Good!" he cried,—"by all means!"

They were soon installed in his small salon, where she quickly spread a table of dainty china. She had

agreed with him in keeping his pictures, bric-à-brac, and prettiest dishes.

"Ah! they are so sweet!" she would say. "Now here is a lovely blue cup for you. I take the dear little pink one,—it's as delicate as an egg-shell,—Sèvres, surely! And here's some of my coffee. It is not as good, perhaps, as you are used to, but——"

"Oh, I'm used to anything,—except being stared at and mobbed by a lot of curious chaps as if I were a calf with six legs, or had run off with the President's daughter, or——"

"Or committed murder, eh?" said she. "People always stare at murderers, do they not? Still, it isn't really bad, you know," abruptly returning to the coffee, "with a petit verre and cigarette."

"Au contraire," he retorted, gayly.

And over their coffee and cognac and cigarettes, surrounded by his tasteful belongings, shut in by the heavy damask hangings, under the graceful wreaths of smoke, they formed a very pretty picture. He, robust, dark, manly; she, frail, delicate, blonde, and distinctively feminine.

The comfort of it all smote them alike. The conversation soon became forced, then ceased, leaving each silently immersed in thought.

But Mlle. Fouchette welcomed this interval of silence with a satisfaction inexpressible. She, too, was under the spell of the place and the occasion. Mlle. Fouchette was not a sentimental woman, as we have seen; but she had recently been undergoing a mental struggle that taxed all her practical common sense. She found now that she saw things more clearly.

The result frightened her.

Mlle. Fouchette felt that she was happy, therefore she was frightened.

She experienced a mysterious glow of gladness—the gladness of mere living—in her veins. It permeated her being and filled her heart with warm desires.

This feeling had been stealing upon her so gradually and insidiously that she had never realized it until this moment,—the moment when it had taken full possession of her soul.

"I love him! I love him!" she repeated to herself. "I have struggled against it,—I have denied it. I did not want to do it,—it is misery! But I can't help it,—I love him! I, Fouchette, the spy, who would have betrayed him, who wronged him, who thought love impossible!"

She did not try to deceive herself. She knew that at this moment, when her heart was so full of him, he was thinking of another woman,—a beautiful and pure being that was worthy of his love,—that he had forgotten her very existence. She had not the remotest idea of trying to attract that love to herself. She did not even indulge in the pardonable girlish dreams in which "If" is the principal character.

He was as impossible to her as the pyramids of Egypt. Therefore she was frightened.

"Mon Dieu! but I surely do love him!" She communed with her poor little bursting heart. "And it is beautiful to love!" She sighed deeply.

"Mademoiselle!"

She started visibly, as if he had read her thoughts as well as heard her sigh, and felt the hot blood mantle

her neck again,—for the second time within her memory.

"Pardon! mademoiselle," he said, gently, "I forgot. I was thinking——"

"Of her? Yes,—I know. It is—how you startled me!"

There was a perceptible chord of sympathy in her voice, and he moved his chair around to hers and made as if he would take her hand in the usual way. But to his surprise she rose and, seating herself on a low divan some distance from him, leaned her elbows on her knees and rested her downcast face between her hands. She could not bear to have him touch her.

"Mon enfant! Mon amie!" he remonstrated, in a grieved tone.

"Bah! it is nothing," she murmured; "and nothing magnified is still nothing."

There was that in her voice which touched a heart surcharged with tenderness. He came over and stood beside her.

"I was thinking——"

"Of her,—yes,—I understand——"

"And I lose myself in my love," he added.

"Yes; love! Oui da!"

She laughed a little hysterically and shrugged the thin shoulders without changing her position.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, pityingly, "you do not know what love is!"

"Me? No! Why should I?"

She never once looked up at him. She dared not.

"And yet you once said love was everything," he continued, thinking only of himself.

"Yes,—everything," she repeated, mechanically. "Did I say that?"

"And you spoke truly, though I did not know it then——"

"No,—I did not know it then," she repeated, absently.

In his self-absorption he did not see the girl in the shadow below him trembling and cowering as if every word he uttered were a blow.

"Love to me is life!" he added, with a mental exaltation that lifted him among the stars.

Mlle. Fouchette did not follow him there. With a low, half-smothered cry she had collapsed and rolled to the floor in a little quivering heap.

CHAPTER XVII

As a medical student, as well as habitué of the quarter, Jean Marot was not greatly alarmed at an ordinary case of hysterics. He soon had Mlle. Fouchette in her proper senses again.

He was possibly not more stupid than any other egoist under similar circumstances, and he attributed her sudden collapse to over-excitement in arranging his affairs.

Mlle. Fouchette lay extended on his divan in silent enjoyment of his manipulations, refusing as long as possible to reopen her eyes. When she finally concluded to do so he was smoothing back her dishevelled hair and gently bathing her face with his wet handkerchief.

"Don't be alarmed, mon enfant," he said, cheerily, "you are all right. But you have worked too hard——"

"Oh! no, no, no!" she interrupted. "And it has been such a pleasure!"

"Yes; but too much pleasure——"

She sighed. Her eyes were wet,—she tried to turn them away.

"Hold on, petite! none of that!"

"Then you must not talk to me in that way,—not now!"

"No? And pray, how, then, mademoiselle?"

"Talk of—tell me of your love, monsieur, mon ami. You were speaking of it but now. Tell me of that, please. It is so—love is so beautiful, Monsieur

Jean! Talk to me of her,—of Mademoiselle Remy. I have a woman's curiosity, monsieur, mon frère."

It was the first time she had called him brother. She had risen upon her elbow and nervously laid her small hand upon his.

She invited herself to the torture. It had an irresistible fascination for her. She gave the executioner the knife and begged him to explore and lay bare her bleeding heart.

"But, mon enfant——"

"Oh! it will do me good to hear you," she pleaded.

It does not require much urging to induce a young man in love to talk about his passion to a sympathetic listener. And there never was time or place more propitious or auditor more tender of spirit.

He began at the beginning, when he first met Mlle. Remy with Lerouge, every detail of which was fixed upon his memory. He told how he sought her in Rue Monge, how Lerouge interposed, how he quarrelled with his friend, how the latter changed his address and kept the girl under close confinement to prevent his seeing her,—Jean was certain of this.

Monsieur Lerouge had a right to protect his sister, even against his late friend; and even if she had been his mistress, Jean now argued, Lerouge was justified; but love is something that in the Latin rises superior to obstacles, beats down all opposition, is obstinate, unreasonable, and uncharitable.

When Mlle. Fouchette, going straight to the core of the matter, asked him what real ground he had for presuming that his attentions, if permitted, would have been agreeable to Mlle. Remy, Jean confessed

reluctantly that there were no reasons for any conclusion on this point.

"But," he wound up, impetuously, "when she knows—if she knew—how I worship her she *must* respond to my affection. A love such as mine could not be forever resisted, mademoiselle. I feel it! I know it!"

"Yes, Monsieur Jean, it would be impossible to—to not——"

"You think so, too, chère amie?"

"Very sure," said Mlle. Fouchette.

"Now you can understand, Fouchette. You are a woman. Put yourself in her place,—imagine that you are Mademoiselle Remy at this moment. And you look something like her, really,—that is, at least you have the exact shade of hair. What beautiful hair you have, Fouchette! Suppose you were Mademoiselle Remy, I was going to say, and I were to tell you all this and—and how much I loved you,—how I adored you,—and got down on my knees to you and begged of you——"

"Oh!"

"And asked you for a corner—one small corner in your heart——"

"Ah! mon ami!"

"What would you——"

"Shall I show you, mon frère?"

"Yes,—quickly!"

He had, with French gesture, suiting the action to the word, knelt beside her and extended his arms, as if it were the woman he loved.

"Mon Dieu!" cried Mlle. Fouchette, throwing her-

self upon his breast precipitately and entwining his neck with her arms,—"it would be this! It would be this! Ah! mon Dieu! It surely would be this!"

For the moment Jean was so carried away by his imagination that he accepted Mlle. Fouchette as Mlle. Remy and pressed her to his heart. He mingled his tears and kisses with hers. Her fair hair fell upon his face and he covered it with passionate caresses. He poured out the endearing words of a heart surcharged with love. It was a very clever make-believe on both sides,—very clever and realistic.

As a medical adviser of an hysterical young woman Jean Marot could scarcely have been recommended.

And it must be remarked, in the same connection, that Mlle. Fouchette remained in this embrace a good deal longer than even a clever imitation seemed to demand. However, since the real thing could not have lasted forever, there must be a limitation to this rehearsal. Both had become silent and thoughtful.

It was Mlle. Fouchette who first moved to disengage, and she did so with a sigh so profound as to appear quite real. This was the second, and she felt it would be the last time. They would never again hold each other thus. Her eyes were red and swollen and her dishevelled hair stuck to her tear-stained face. She was not at all pretty at the moment, yet Jean would have gone to the wood of St. Cloud sword in hand to prove her the best-hearted little woman in the world.

"Voilà!" she exclaimed, with affected gayety, "how foolish I am, monsieur! But you are so eloquent of your passion that you carry one away with you."

"I hope it will have that effect upon Mademoiselle Remy," he said, but rather doubtfully.

"So I have given a satisfactory——"

"So real, indeed, Fouchette, that I almost forgot it was only you."

Mademoiselle Fouchette was bending over the basin.

"I think"—splash—"that I'll"—splash—"go on the stage," she murmured.

"You'd be a hit, Fouchette."

"If I had a lover—er—equal to the occasion, perhaps."

"Oh! as to that——"

"Now, Monsieur Jean, we have not yet settled your affair," she interrupted, throwing herself again upon the divan among the cushions.

"No; not quite," said he.

She tried to think connectedly. But everything seemed such a jumble. And out of this chaos of thought came the details of the miserable part she had played.

Her part!

What if he knew that she was merely the wretched tool of the police? What would he say if he came to know that she had once reported his movements at the Préfecture? And what would he do if he were aware that she knew the true relation of Lerouge and Mlle. Remy and had intentionally misled both him and Madeleine?

Fortunately, Mlle. Fouchette had been spared the knowledge of the real cause of Madeleine's misfortune,—the jealous grisette whom she had set on to worse than murder.

But she was thinking only of Jean Marot now. Love had awakened her soul to the enormity of her offence. It also caused her to suffer remorse for her general conduct. Before she loved she never cared; she had never suffered mentally. Now she was on the rack. She was being punished.

Love had furrowed the virgin ground of her heart and turned up self-consciousness and conscience, and sowed womanly sweetness, and tenderness, and pity, and humility, and the sensitiveness to pain.

Mlle. Fouchette, living in the shadow of the world's greatest educational institutions, was, perhaps naturally, a heathen. She feared neither God nor devil.

Jean Marot was her only tangible idea of God. His contempt would be her punishment. To live where he was not would be Hell.

To secure herself against this damnation she was ready to sacrifice anything,—everything! She would have willingly offered herself to be cuffed and beaten every day of her life by him, and would have worshipped him and kissed the hand that struck her.

Perhaps, after all, the purest and holiest love is that which stands ready to sacrifice everything to render its object happy; that, blotting out self and trampling natural desire underfoot, thinks only of the one great aim and end, the happiness of the beloved.

This was the instinct now of the girl who struggled with her emotions, who sought a way out that would accomplish that end very much desired by her as well as Jean. There was at the same time a faint idea that her own material happiness lay in the same direction.

"Monsieur Jean!"

"Well?'"

"You must make friends with Lerouge."

"But, mon enfant, if——"

"There are no 'buts' and 'ifs.' You must make friends with the brother or you can never hope to win his sister. That is clear. Write to him,—apologize to him,—anything——"

"I don't just see my way open," he began. "You can't apologize to a man who tries to assassinate you on sight."

"You were friends before that day in the Place de la Concorde?"

"We had not come to blows."

"Politics,—is that all?"

"That is all that divides us, and, parbleu! it divides a good many in France just now."

"Yes. Monsieur Jean, you must change your politics," she promptly responded.

"Wha-at? Never! Why——"

"Not for the woman you love?"

"But, Fouchette, you don't understand, mon enfant. A gentleman can't change his politics as he does his coat."

"Men do, monsieur,—men do,—yes, every day."

"But——"

"What does it amount to, anyhow?—politics? Bah! One side is just like the other side."

"Oh! oh!"

"Half of them don't know. It's only the difference between celui-ci and celui-là. You must quit ci and join là, n'est-ce pas?"

Mlle. Fouchette laid this down as if it were merely a choice between mutton and lamb chops for dinner. But Jean Marot walked impatiently up and down.

"You overlook the possible existence of such a thing as principle,—as honor, mademoiselle," he observed, somewhat coldly.

"Rubbish!" said Mlle. Fouchette.

"Oh! oh! what political morals!" he laughingly exclaimed, with an affectation of horror.

"There are no morals in politics."

"Precious little, truly!"

"Principles are a matter of belief,—political principles. You change your belief,—the principles go with it; you can't desert 'em,—they follow you. It is the rest of them, those who disagree with you, who never have any principles. Is it not so, monsieur?"

He laughed the more as he saw that she was serious. And yet there was a nipping satire in her words that tickled his fancy.

A gentle knock at the door interrupted this political argument. A peculiar, diffident, apologetic knock, like the forerunner of the man come to borrow money. There was a red bell-cord hanging outside, too, but the rap came from somebody too timid to make a noise.

Mlle. Fouchette started up as if it were the signal for execution. She turned pale, and placed her finger on her lips. Then, with a significant glance at Jean, she gathered herself together and tiptoed to a closet in the wall.

She entered the closet and closed the door softly upon herself.

Jean had regarded her with surprise, then with astonishment. He saw no reason for this singular development of timidity. As soon as he had recovered sufficiently he opened the door.

A tall, thin man quietly stepped into the room, as quietly shut the door behind him, and addressed the young man briskly,—

"Monsieur Marot?"

"Yes, monsieur, at your service."

"So."

"And this is—ah! I remember—this is——"

"Inspector Loup."

The fishy eyes of Monsieur l'Inspecteur had been swimming about in their fringed pools, taking in every detail of the chamber. They penetrated the remotest corners, plunged at the curtains of the bed, and finally rested for a wee little moment upon the two cups and saucers, the two empty glasses, the two spoons, which still remained on the table. And yet had not Inspector Loup called attention to the fact one would never have suspected that he had seen anything.

"Pardon, Monsieur Marot," he said, half behind his hand, "but I am not disturbing any quiet little—er——"

"Not yet, Monsieur l'Inspecteur," replied the young man, suggestively. "Go on, I beg."

"Ah! not yet? Good! Very well,—then I will try not to do so."

Whereupon Monsieur l'Inspecteur dived down into a deep pocket and brought up a package neatly wrapped in pink paper and sealed with a red seal.

The package bore the address of "M. Jean Marot."

"May I ask if Monsieur Marot can divine the contents of this parcel?"

"Monsieur l'Inspecteur will pardon me,—I'm not good at guessing."

"Monsieur missed some personal property after his arrest——"

"If that is my property," Jean interrupted, brusquely, "it ought to be a gold watch, hunting case, chronometer, Geneva make, with eighteen-carat gold chain, dragon-head design for hook; a bunch of keys, seven in number, and a door-key, and about one hundred and eighty francs in paper, gold, and silver."

"Very good. Excellent memory, monsieur. It ought to serve you well enough to keep out of such brawls hereafter. Here,—examine!"

Hastily opening the package, Jean found his watch and chain and everything else intact, so far as he could recollect. He expressed his delight,—and when his grasp left the thin hand of the police official it was to leave a twenty-franc gold piece there.

"Will monsieur kindly sign this receipt?" inquired Monsieur l'Inspecteur, whose hand had closed upon the coin with true official instinct.

"But how and where did they get the things back?" inquired Jean, having complied with this reasonable request.

"I know nothing about that," said the man.

"And how did they know I had lost them? I never complained."

"Then perhaps somebody else did, eh?"

The bright little fishy right eye partially closed to indicate a roguish expression.

"Bon soir, monsieur."

And with another wink which meant "You can't fool me, young man," he was gone.

"Well, this is luck!" muttered Jean aloud. He examined the watch lovingly. It was a present from his father. "But how did they get these? how did they know they were mine? and how did they know where I lived? Who asked——"

He went back to the closet and told Mlle. Fouchette the coast was clear. There was no answer. He tried the door. It was locked. She had turned the key on the inside.

"Mademoiselle! Come!"

He waited and listened. Not a sound.

"Mademoiselle! Ah, çà! He is gone long ago!"

Still not a stir. Perhaps she was asleep,—or, maybe, —why, she would smother in that place!

He kicked the door impatiently. He got down upon his breast and put his ear to the crevice below. If she were prostrated he might hear her breathing.

All was silence.

This closet door was the merest sheathing, flush with the wall and covered with the same paper, after the fashion of the ancient Parisian appartements, and had nothing tangible to the grasp save the key, which was now on the inside. Jean tried to jostle this out of place by inserting other keys, but unsuccessfully.

"Sacré!" he cried, in despair; "but we'll see!"

And he hastily brought a combination poker and stove-lifter from the kitchen, and, inserting the sharp end in the crack near the lock, gave the improvised

"jimmy" a vigorous wrench. The light wood-work flew in splinters.

At the same moment the interior of the closet was thus suddenly exposed to the uninterrupted view.

Jean recoiled in astonishment that was almost terror. If he had been confronted with the suspended corpse of Mlle. Fouchette he could have scarcely been more startled.

For Mlle. Fouchette was not there!

The cold sweat started out of him. He felt among his clothes,—passed his hand over the three remaining walls. They appeared solid enough.

"Que diable! but where is she, then?" he muttered.

He was dazed,—rendered incapable of reasoning. He went around vaguely examining his rooms, peering behind curtains and even moving bits of furniture, as if Mlle. Fouchette were the elusive collar-button and might have rolled out of sight somewhere among the furniture.

"Peste! this is astonishing!"

All of this time there was the lock with the key on the inside. Without being a spiritualist, Jean felt that nobody but spirits could come out of a room leaving the doors locked and the keys on the inside. But for that lock, he might have even set it down to optical illusion and have persuaded himself that perhaps she had really never entered that place at all.

As Jean Marot was not wholly given to illusions or superstitions, he logically concluded that there was some other outlet to that closet.

"And why such a thing as that?" he asked himself. What could it be for? Was it a trap? Perhaps it

was a police souricière? He remembered the warning of Benoit.

Jean hesitated,—quite naturally, since he was up to the tricks of the political police. If this were a trap, why, Mlle. Fouchette must have known all about it! Yet that would be impossible.

Then he thought of M. de Beauchamp, and his brow cleared. Whatever the arrangement, it could have never been designed with regard to the present occupant of the appartement,—and M. de Beauchamp had escaped.

He lighted a cigarette and took a turn or two up and down,—a habit of his when lost in thought.

"Ah! it is a door of love!" he concluded. "Yes; that is all. Well, we shall find out about that pretty soon."

The more he thought of the handsome, godlike artist who had so mysteriously fled, why, the more he recalled Mlle. Fouchette's confusion on a certain evening when he first called on her, and her recent disinclination to discuss his disappearance. He was now certain that this mysterious exit emptied into her room. He smiled at his own sagacity. His philosophy found the same expression of the cabman of Rue Monge,—

"Toujours de même, ces femmes-là!"

He laughed at the trick she had played him; he would show her how quickly he had reached its solution. He went outside and tapped gently on her door.

No reply.

He tried the lock, but it was unyielding. Examination by the light of a match showed no key on the inside.

"Eh bien! I will go by the same route," he said, returning to his room.

He brought a lighted candle to bear on the magical closet. It proved to be, as stated, the ordinary blind closet of the ancient Parisian houses, the depth of the wall's thickness and about three feet wide; the door being flush with the wall and covered with the same paper, the opening was unnoticeable to the casual view.

All Parisian doors close with a snap-lock, and a key is indispensable. This knowledge is acquired by the foreigner after leaving his key on the inside a few times and hunting up a locksmith after midnight.

The back of these closets, which are used for cupboards as well as receptacles for clothing, abuts on the adjoining room, quite often, in a thin sheathing of lath and plaster, which, being covered with the wall-paper, is concealed from the neighboring eyes, but through which a listener may be constantly informed as to what is going on next door.

A superficial survey of the place having developed no unusual characteristics, Jean took down all of his clothing and emptied the closet of its contents to the last old shoe.

With the candle to assist him, he then carefully examined the rear wall.

CHAPTER XVIII

Mlle. Fouchette had her reasons for not wishing to meet Inspector Loup anywhere or at any time. These reasons were especially sound, considering this particular time and place.

And that the knock on Jean's door was that of Inspector Loup she had no more doubt than if she had been confronted by that official in person.

Therefore her flight.

The visit of Inspector Loup had the same effect upon Mlle. Fouchette that the unexpected appearance of the general of an army might have upon a sleepy picket-guard or a man off post. Inspector Loup was to her a sort of human monster—a moral devil-fish—that not even the cleverest could escape if he chose to reach out for them.

Mlle. Fouchette had been seized by the tentacles of Inspector Loup in her infancy, as has been seen, and from that moment had become the creature of his imperial will,—had, in fact, finally become one of the myriad infinitesimal tentacles herself, subservient to the master-mind. Whatever scruples she had imbibed from the society of the Rendez-Vous pour Cochers had been dissipated by the Jesuit sisters of Le Bon Pasteur. In the select circle of the vagabonds of the Porte de Charenton and robbers of the wood of Vincennes the police agent was execrated, and the secret informer, or spy, was deemed the most despicable of human creatures and worthy only of a violent death; whereas the good Mother Supérieure of Le Bon Pasteur encouraged the tale-bearer and rewarded the in-

former with her favor and the assurance of the Divine blessing. Even the good Sister Agnes—now already a kind of shadowy memory—had taught the waif that spying out and reporting to the constituted authorities was commendable and honorable.

And to do Mlle. Fouchette full justice she so profited by these religious teachings that she was enabled to impart valuable inside information to Inspector Loup's branch of the government concerning the royalist plottings at Le Bon Pasteur. The importance of these revelations Mlle. Fouchette herself did not understand, but that it was of great value to the ministry—as possibly corroborating other facts of a similar nature in their possession—was evidenced by the transfer of Mlle. Fouchette's name to a special list of secret agents at the Ministry, with liberty to make special reports over the head of Monsieur l'Inspecteur himself.

From that moment the latter official watched Mlle. Fouchette with a vigilant eye; for under the spy system agents were employed to watch and report the actions of other agents. This held good from the top of the Secret Service down,—reminding one of the vermin of Hudibras that—

> "had fleas to bite 'em,
> And these same fleas had lesser fleas,
> So on ad infinitum."

In Mlle. Fouchette the government had found one of the lesser fleas, but none the less sharp, shrewd, active, and unconscionable.

Up to a quite recent period.

Mlle. Fouchette's reports to the Préfecture had lat-

terly betrayed a laxity of interest that invited official attention, if they did not call down upon her the official censure.

The girl was conscious of this. Half sullen, half defiant, she was struggling under the weight of the new views of life recently acquired. Like the rest of the intelligent world, whose wisdom chiefly consists in unlearning what it has already learned, Mlle. Fouchette was somewhat confused at the rapidity with which old ideas went to pieces and new ideas crowded upon her mind.

Because—well, because of Jean Marot.

A single look from Inspector Loup before Jean would terrify her,—a word would crush her.

She must have time.

And why did Inspector Loup come there in person as errand-boy unless for another purpose? She thought of the secret agents who usually accompanied Inspector Loup. She knew that at this moment they were spread out below like the videttes of an army. They were down in the Rue St. Jacques in their usual function of Inspector Loup's eyes that saw everything and Inspector Loup's ears that heard everything.

This visit to Jean was a mere pretext that covered something more important. Was it concerning Jean? Or, was it her? Perhaps Monsieur l'Inspecteur wanted her,—a species of flattery which would have been incense to her a month ago, and was now a terror.

It was only a few days since she had earned fifty francs and the compliments of Inspector Loup. It was true, Monsieur de Beauchamp had got away to Brussels, the centre of the Orléans conspiracy.

He was the first victim of the new ministry, and his flight indicated the change of policy as to the well-known and openly tolerated machinations of the royalists. Some of the more timid Orléanists in Paris and the provinces, recognizing the signal, took the alarm and also put the frontier between them and Inspector Loup.

Mlle. Fouchette's conscience was clear; she had combined feminine philanthropy with duty in Monsieur de Beauchamp's case—he was such a handsome and such an agreeable gentleman—and had given him the straight tip after having betrayed him. She had not repented this good action, but she felt the cold chills again when she thought of Inspector Loup. She was only a poor petite moucharde,—a word from him —nay, a nod, a significant wink—would deprive her of the sunshine that ripens the grapes of France.

When Mlle. Fouchette fled before Inspector Loup's knock she took the key of the closet and these swift reflections with her. The snap-lock was familiar to her, and the key was the only means of pulling the door shut upon herself, and the only means of opening it again when she chose to come out.

She leaned against the side of the dark box and listened. The sound of Monsieur l'Inspecteur's soft voice did not startle her,—she knew it. She would have been surprised if it had been anything else. The watch and chain episode reassured her but little,—beyond the assurance that Jean was in no immediate danger.

She got over in the farthest corner behind the clothes, thinking to have some fun with Jean when he

should come to search for her. The wall was very thick and there was ample space behind her, but this space seemed to give way and let her back farther and farther, unexpectedly, as one leans against an opening door.

It was a door. And it let her into the wall, apparently, and so suddenly that she lost her balance.

As soon as she had recovered from her astonishment she stood perfectly still for a few moments and listened attentively. Fortunately, she had made no noise.

"Dear me! but this is very curious," she murmured, feeling the walls on all sides.

She was in another closet similar to the one she had just left,—she could feel the empty hooks above her head. Her hand struck a key.

All the curiosity of the moucharde came over her. She forgot all about Jean,—even Inspector Loup. She turned the key slowly and noiselessly and opened the door,—a little at first, then more boldly.

She heard nothing. She saw nothing. Whatever the place it was as black as pitch.

She now recalled the mysterious goings and comings of the friends of Monsieur de Beauchamp,—the disappearance of half a dozen at a time,—the peculiar noises heard from her side of the closet.

"Truly, this is the back shop of Monsieur de Beauchamp," said she, as she stumbled upon a box. "If I only had a candle or a match."

She felt the box, which was almost square, and was so heavy she could scarcely raise one end of it.

She groped along the wall, where similar boxes were

piled up, and began to wonder what on earth Monsieur de Beauchamp had stored there in his back shop.

A startling suggestion stole into her mind,—perhaps it was——

She hastily sought the door by which she had entered, and in her excitement she stumbled against it.

The door closed with a snap.

Mlle. Fouchette was not afraid of being alone in the dark, yet she trembled nervously from head to foot.

She knew that the key was on the inside!

Then she remembered that other door only a few feet away with its key on the inside and with Jean Marot on the outside. And she trembled more than ever.

What would Jean think of her?

Of course, she knew he would be likely to force the closet door; but when he had found her missing,—what then? Would he be angry? Would he not suspect some trick? Would he persevere till he found her?

It was all about Jean,—of herself she scarcely thought, only so far as the effect might come through him. All at once she felt rather than heard the dull sound of the breaking door beyond.

"Ah! he has broken the door. He will come! He has discovered it!"

She beat the walls with her small fists,—kicked the unresponsive stone with her thin little shoes,—her blows gave out no sound. If she only had something to knock with——

She fumbled blindly in the darkness among the boxes. Perhaps—yes, here was one open, and—

"Voilà!"

She laid her hand on a heavy, cylindrical substance like a piece of iron gas-pipe, only—funny, but it was packed in something like sawdust.

She tapped smartly on the wall with it—once, twice, thrice—at regular intervals, then listened.

The two similar raps from the other side showed that she was both heard and understood.

"He has found it. Ah! here he is!"

And with her last exclamation Jean appeared, candle in hand, peering into the room and at Mlle. Fouchette in the dazed way more characteristic of the somnambulist than of one awake and in the full possession of his senses.

"Mon Dieu! mon enfant, what have we here?" he ejaculated as soon as he recovered breath. "What is it? Are you all right? How foolish you are, little one!"

"All right, mon ami."

And she briefly and rapidly recited her adventures, at the end triumphantly exhibiting the bit of iron pipe with which she had opened communication.

His face suddenly froze with horror!

"Give it to me!"

He snatched it from her hand excitedly and held it an instant apart from his candle.

"A thousand thunders!" he gasped, at the same time handling the thing gingerly and looking for a place to lay it down.

"But——"

"It is a dynamite bomb!" he said, hoarsely.

"Mon Dieu!"

She turned as white as a sheet and staggered backward only to come in contact with one of the boxes on the floor. She recoiled from this as if she had been threatened by a snake. Mlle. Fouchette was quite feminine. A mouse now would have scared her into convulsions.

"Where did you get this, petite?" he asked. "It is death,—a horrible death!"

She pointed to the boxes, unable to speak.

"Dynamite bombs! cartridges! powder and ball!" he declared, as he casually examined the nearest. "It is a real arsenal!"

"Come, Jean! Let us go!" said the girl, seizing him. "It is dangerous! Your candle! think! Come!"

She dragged him towards the open door. "Ah! to think I beat upon the wall with that—that——"

She shivered like a leaf.

"You are right," said he. "The candle is dangerous. I will get my bicycle-lamp and we will investigate this mystery."

"It is no longer a mystery," she replied,—"not to me. It is the hand of the Duke."

"It is very singular," he muttered. "Very curious."

"It is a fairy romance," said she, as they passed back through the narrow opening to Jean's appartement.

"There is no fairy story about that dynamite,—that, at least, is both practical and modern."

"Oh! I mean this secret passage and all that——"

"Yes; but don't you know, mon enfant, that I first thought it led to—to your——"

"For shame! Monsieur Jean!"

"I don't know," said he, shaking his head smilingly. "Monsieur de Beauchamp was a very handsome man."

"Yes, besides being an ardent servant of the Duc d'Orléans and an artist collector of pictures and bric-à-brac——"

"Especially 'bric-à-brac,'" said Jean, with sarcasm.

"Anyhow, mon ami, you now know——"

"That I was unjust to you, yes; pardon me! You could know very little of Beauchamp, since he was able to collect all of this bric-à-brac under your nose."

Mlle. Fouchette reddened, thinking, nervously, of what Inspector Loup would say on that head. Jean saw this color and changed the conversation.

"Come, now, let us go and explore Monsieur de Beauchamp's articles of vertu."

With the bicycle bull's-eye light in hand he led the way back through the secret passage, followed closely by the young girl.

"Monsieur de Beauchamp wasn't the mighty Cæsar in one thing," said Jean, as he squeezed through the narrow opening in the wall.

"How is that?"

"He had only lean men about him,—true conspirators."

"Yes,—it was necessary."

They found the dark room where all of the munitions of war and compound assassination were stored. Entering, they inadvertently closed the door behind them.

"Dame!" cried Mlle. Fouchette. "The key, monsieur! the key!"

"Que diable!"

"How provoking!"

"But we have the dynamite——"

"Ah, çà!"

But somehow Mlle. Fouchette was not as badly frightened at the situation as one might have the right to expect. She even laughed gayly at their mutual imprisonment.

"Dynamite!" muttered Jean,—a throne founded upon dynamite would crumble quickly——"

"Yes, and by dynamite," said she.

"Monsieur de Beauchamp was——"

"Is a royalist leader——"

"An assassin!"

"A tool of the Duc d'Orléans."

"The Duke would never stoop to wholesale murder! Never!"

"It is the way of kings, n'est-ce pas? to shelter themselves from responsibility behind their tools?"

"Stop! there must be guns for this amunition. It must be——"

Before the idea had fairly germinated in his brain Jean discovered a door that in the candle-light had easily escaped their observation. It was at the opposite side of the room from which they had entered. It was a narrow door and the key was in the lock.

"Another way out," suggested the girl.

"Surely, petite, since that closet entrance was never meant for a porte-cochère."

The door opened upon a narrow and dark passage paved with worn tiles. At the end of this passage another door barred the way. An examination showed

at once that this last had not been used for a long time. To the left, however, a mere slit in the stone was seen to involve a steep stair of very much worn steps. Opposite the entrance to this stairway was a shallow niche in the wall, in which were the remains of burned candles.

"Cat stairs," said Mlle. Fouchette.

"And the cats have used it a good deal of late, I should judge," he observed, carefully examining the entrance in the glare of the lamp.

"Leads to the roof, probably," she muttered.

"Probably. Let us mount."

"Oh, yes, let us follow the trail."

The instinct of the woman and the spy was now strong within her.

The "cat stairs" were closed at the top by a heavy oaken trap securely fastened within by two iron hooks.

"It is astonishing!" he said.

"What?"

"These fastenings, keys, bolts, bars, are all on this side."

"Which shows merely that they are to be used only from this direction, does it not?"

"Yes, that is plain; but we are now in another building, evidently,—a building that must open on some other street than the Rue St. Jacques."

In the mean time Jean had finally unfastened and forced the trap. In another moment he had drawn her through the opening and they stood under a cloudless sky.

"Ah!" she murmured.

"We are free, at least, mon enfant."

She was not thinking of that. The silence, the glorious vault of stars, the——

"S-sh!"

"It's the bell of Sainte Geneviève," he whispered, crossing himself involuntarily.

"Cover the light, Monsieur Jean. These roofs have scores of eyes——"

"And a couple of prowlers might be the target for a score of bullets, eh? True enough!"

"Midnight!"

She had been counting the strokes of the clock, the sound of which came, muffled and sullen, from the old square belfry beyond the Panthéon.

The roofs of this old quarter presented a curious conglomeration of the architectural monstrosities of seven centuries. It was a fantastic tumult of irregular shapes that only took the semblance of human design upon being considered in detail. As a whole they seemed the result of a great upheaval of nature—the work of some powerful demon—rather than that of human architectural conception. These confused and frightful shapes stretched from street to street,—stiff steeps of tile and moss-covered slate, massive chimneys and blackened chimney-pots, great dormer-windows and rows of mere slits and holes of glass betraying the existence of humanity within, walls and copings of rusty stone running this way and that and stopping abruptly, mysterious squares of even blackness representing courts and breathing-spaces,—up hill and down dale, under the canopy of stars, as far as the eye could reach!

And here, close at hand, and towering aloft in the

entrancing grandeur of celestial beauty, rose the dome of the Panthéon,—so close, indeed, and so grandly great and beautiful in contrast with all the rest, that it seemed the stupendous creation of the angels.

"You are cold, petite?" he whispered.

She had shivered and drawn a little closer to him.

"No," replied the girl, glancing around her, "but it is frightful."

"What?"

"Oh, these sombre roofs."

"Bah! petite," he responded lightly, "ghosts don't promenade the roofs of Paris."

"They'd break their ghostly necks if they did."

"Come! and let us be careful not to break ours. Allons!"

They stole softly along the adjoining wall that ended at a court. There was clearly no thoroughfare in this direction. Coming back on the trail he examined the stone attentively, she meanwhile shading the light with the folds of her dress. It was comparatively easy to note the recent wear of feet in the time-accumulation of rust and dirt and dry moss of these old stones. In a few moments he discovered that the tracks turned off between two high-pitched roofs towards the Panthéon. As from one of these slopes grinned a double row of dormer-windows, it seemed incredible that any considerable number of prowlers might long escape observation.

"But they may be vacant," said the girl, when Jean had suggested the contingency.

"That is quite true."

So they stealthily crept rather than walked on, the

end of the gutter abutting on another court. The depression was marked here by virgin moss.

"It is very extraordinary," growled Jean, entirely at a loss to account for the abrupt close of the trail. There was no way out of this trough save by climbing over one of these steep roofs, except——

"The window, perhaps," she whispered.

"True!"

Rapidly moving the lamp along the bottom of the gutter, Jean stopped.

"There it is!"

She pointed to the window above them with suppressed excitement.

There were almost imperceptible cleats cleverly laid across the corrugated tiling; for the roof had a pitch of fifty degrees, and the casement was half-way up the slope.

"It must be so," he said. "Wait!"

With the lantern concealed beneath his coat he scrambled noiselessly up and examined the window. It was not fastened. Whoever had passed here last had come this way. He opened it a little, then wider.

"Come! Quickly!"

Even as he called to her Jean threw open wide the windows,—which folded from within, like all French windows—and entered, leaving Mlle. Fouchette to follow at will. That damsel's catlike nature made a roof a mere playground, and she was almost immediately behind him.

"Mon Dieu! What is this?"

They had descended four steps to the floor, and now the exclamation burst from them simultaneously.

For a minute they stood, half breathless, looking about them.

They seemed to be in an empty room embracing the entire unfinished garret of a house, gable to gable. The space was all roof and floor,—that is, the roof rose abruptly from the floor on two sides to the comb above.

As the eye became accustomed to the place, it first took in the small square boxes, some of which had evidently been unpacked or prepared for that process, the litter being scattered about the floor,—the boxes similar to those stored in the dark room below. There were roughly constructed platforms beneath all of the windows, with steps leading up to the same. Beneath these platforms and along the whole of one side of the room were wooden arm-racks glistening with arms of the latest model. Belts, cartridge-boxes, bayonets, swords, an immense assortment of military paraphernalia, lay piled on the floor at one end of the room.

At the opposite end was mounted on a swivel a one-pound Maxim rapid-firer, the wall in front of it being pierced to the last brick.

A few blows, and lo! the muzzle of the modern death-dealer!

Along the lower edge of the roof towards the Panthéon might have been found numerous similar places, requiring only a thrust to become loopholes for prostrate riflemen.

The most cursory glance from the windows above showed that these commanded the Place du Panthéon and Rue Soufflot,—the scene of bloody street battles of every revolutionary epoch.

Fifty active men from this vantage could have rendered either street or barricade untenable, or as support to a barricade in the Place du Panthéon have made such a barricade impregnable to exposed troops.

"It is admirable!" cried Jean, lost in contemplation of the strategic importance of the position.

"It is wonderful, but——"

"Artillery? Yes," he interrupted, anticipating her reasoning; "but artillery could not be elevated to command this place from the street, and as for Mont Valérien——"

"The Panthéon——"

"Yes,—exactly,—they would never risk the Panthéon. Even the Prussians spared that."

"Oh, Monsieur Jean, see!"

She had discovered a white silk flag embroidered with the lilies of France.

"The wretches! They would restore the hated emblem of the Louis! This is too much!" he exclaimed, in wrath.

"It is the way of the king, n'est-ce pas?"

She looked at him curiously.

"But the Duc d'Orléans should know that the people of France will never abandon the tricolor,—never!"

"The people of France are fools!"

"True!" he rejoined, hotly, "and I am but one of them!"

"Ah, Monsieur Jean! Now you are uttering the words of wisdom. Recall the language of Monsieur de Beauchamp,—that it is necessary to make use of everybody and everything going the way of the king,—tending to re-establish the throne!"

"The throne! I will have none of it. I'm a republican!"

She smiled. "And as a republican, what is your first duty now?"

"Why, to inform the proper authorities of our discovery."

"Good! Let us go!"

"Allons!" he responded, briskly.

"But how will we get out?"

"How about this door?"

He had brought the rays of the lamp to bear upon a door at the gable opposite the Maxim gun. It was bolted and heavily barred, but these fastenings were easily removed.

As anticipated, this door led to a passage and to stairs which, in turn, led down to the street. They closed the door with as little noise as possible, carefully locking it and bringing away the key.

A light below showed that the lower part of this house was inhabited, probably by people innocent of the terrible drama organized above their heads. But the slightest noise might arouse these people, and in such a case the Frenchman is apt to shoot first and make inquiries afterwards. However, once in the street, they could go around to their own rooms without trouble. It was worth the risk.

The stairs, fortunately, had a strip of carpeting, so they soon found themselves safely at the street door. To quietly open this was but the work of a few seconds, when——

They stepped into the arms of Inspector Loup and his agents.

CHAPTER XIX

"PARDIEU!" exclaimed Inspector Loup, who never recognized his agents officially outside of the Préfecture; "it is La Savatière!"

Mlle. Fouchette trembled a little.

"And Monsieur Marot! Why, this is an unexpected pleasure," continued the police official.

"Then the pleasure is all on one side," promptly responded Jean, who was disgusted beyond measure.

Inspector Loup regarded the pair with his fishy eyes half closed. For once in his life he was nonplussed. Nay, if anything could be said to be surprising to Inspector Loup, this meeting was unexpected and surprising. But he was too clever a player to needlessly expose the weakness of his hand.

Mlle. Fouchette's eyes avoided scrutiny. She had given Jean one quick, significant glance and then looked demurely around, as if the matter merely bored her.

Jean understood that glance and was dumb.

Inspector Loup's waiting tactics did not work.

"So my birdies must coo at midnight on the housetops," he finally remarked.

"Well, monsieur," retorted the young man, "is there any law against that?"

"Where's the lantern?"

"Here," said Jean, turning the bull's-eye on the face of the inspector.

"Bicycle. Is your wheel above, monsieur?" This ironically.

"Not exactly, Monsieur l'Inspecteur."

"Now, Monsieur Jean," put in Mlle. Fouchette, "if Monsieur l'Inspecteur has no further questions to ask——"

"Not so fast, mademoiselle," sharply interrupted the officer. "Just wait a bit; for, while I do not claim that roof-walking at midnight is unpardonable in cats and lovers, it is especially forbidden to enter other people's houses when they are asleep."

Mlle. Fouchette's nervousness did not escape the little fishy eyes. While it was already evident that Monsieur l'Inspecteur was talking at random, it was morally certain that he would smoke them out.

"And two persons armed with a dark-lantern, coming out of a house not their own, at this time of night," continued the inspector, "are under legitimate suspicion until they can explain."

Mlle. Fouchette made a sign to Jean that he was to hold his tongue.

"Now, none of that, mademoiselle!" cried the inspector, angrily.

He rudely separated the couple, and, taking charge of the girl himself, turned Jean over to four of his agents who were near at hand.

"We'll put you where you'll have time to reflect," he said.

Mlle. Fouchette was inspired. She saw that it was not a souricière. If the inspector knew what was above, he would not have left the entrances and exits unguarded. To be absolutely sure of this, she waited until they had passed the Rue St. Jacques.

"Now is my opportunity to play quits," she said to

herself, and her face betrayed the intensity of her purpose.

"Monsieur l'Inspecteur!"

"Well?"

"I would like a private word with you, please."

"What's that? Oh, it's of no use," he replied.

"To your advantage, monsieur."

"And yours, eh?"

"Undoubtedly," she frankly said.

They walked on a few steps. Then the inspector raised his hand for those in the rear to stop.

They soon stood in the dark entrance of a wine-shop, the inspector of the secret police and his petite moucharde, both as sharp and hard as flint.

"Now, out with it, you little vixen!" he commanded, assuming his brutal side. "Let us have no trifling. You know me!"

"And you know *me,* monsieur!" she retorted, with the first show of anger in her voice.

"Speak!"

"I said I had important information," she began, calmly. But it was with an effort, for he had shaken her roughly.

"Yes!" he put in; "and see that you make good, mon enfant!"

He was suspicious that this was some clever ruse to escape her present dilemma. Monsieur l'Inspecteur certainly knew Mlle. Fouchette.

"Information that you do not seem to want, monsieur——"

"Will you speak?"

"I have the right to reveal it only to the Ministry," she coldly replied.

"Is—is it so important as that?" he asked. But his tone had changed. She had made a move as if the interview were over.

"So important that for you to be the master of it will make you master of the Ministry and——"

"Bah!" he ejaculated, contemptuously. He was master of them already.

"And the mere publicity of it would send your name throughout the civilized world in a day!"

"Speak up, then; don't be afraid——"

"It is such that, no matter what you may do in the future, nothing would give you greater reputation."

"But, ma fillette,"—it was the utmost expression of his official confidence,—"and for you, more money, eh?"

"No, no! It is not money!"

She spoke up sharply now.

"Good!" said he, "for you won't get it."

"It is not a question of money, monsieur. If I——"

"There is no 'if' about it!" he exclaimed, irritated at her bargaining manner and again flying into a passion. "You'll furnish the information you're paid to furnish, and without any 'question' or 'if,' or I'll put you behind the bars. Yes, sacré bleu! on a diet of bread and water!"

He was angry that she had the whip hand and that she was driving him.

"Certainly, monsieur,"—and her tone was freezingly polite,—"but then I will furnish it to the Ministry, as I'm specially instructed in such cases to do."

"Then why do you come to me with it?" he demanded.

"Monsieur l'Inspecteur, I would do you a favor if you would let me——"

"For a substantial favor in return!"

"Precisely."

"Ugh! of course!"

"Of course, monsieur,—partly. Partly because you have been kind to me, generally, and I would now reciprocate that kindness."

"So! Well, mademoiselle, now we understand each other, how much?"

"Monsieur?"

"I say how much money do you want?"

"But, monsieur—no, we do not understand each other. I said it is not a question of money. If I wanted money I could get it at the Ministry,—yes, thousands of francs!"

"Perhaps you overrate your find, mademoiselle," he suggested, but with unconcealed interest.

"Impossible!" she exclaimed.

"It ought to be very important indeed," she continued, "equally important to you in its suppression, monsieur."

"Ah!"

The fishy eyes were very active.

"And who besides you possesses this secret?"

"Monsieur Marot."

"So! He alone?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"In a word, mademoiselle, then, what is it that you want?"

"Liberty!"

The inspector started back, confused.

"What's that?" he growled, warily.

"I said 'liberty.' I mean freedom from this service! I'm tired, monsieur! I would be free! I would live!"

The veteran looked at her first with incredulity, then astonishment, then pity. He began to think the girl was really crazy, and that her story was probably all a myth. He suddenly turned the lantern from under his cloak upon her upturned face, and he saw that which thrilled him, but which he could not understand.

It was the first time within Inspector Loup's experience that he had found any one wanting to quit—actually refusing good money to quit—the Secret System, having once enjoyed its delightful atmosphere.

"Monsieur l'Inspecteur?"

But he was so much involved in his mental struggle with this new phase of detective life that he did not answer. He had figured it out.

"So! I think I understand now. But why quit? You have struck something better; but, surely, mademoiselle, one can be in love and yet do one's duty to the State."

"Monsieur!"

"Oh, well; you can resign, can't you? Nobody hinders you." And be a fool! was in Monsieur l'Inspecteur's tone.

"Yes; but that is not all, monsieur. I want it with your free consent and written quittance,—and more, your word of honor that I will never be molested by

you or your agents,—that I will be as if I had never been!"

"And if I agree to all this——"

"I shall prove my good faith."

"When?"

"At once!"

"Good! Then we *do* understand each other," he said, taking her hand for the first time in his life.

"I trust you, monsieur."

"You have my word. But you will permit me to give you a last word of fatherly advice before I cease to know you. Keep that gay young lover of yours out of mischief; he will never again get off as easily as he did the other day."

"Thanks, Monsieur l'Inspecteur!" said Mlle. Fouchette, very glad indeed now that the lantern was not turned on her.

"Allons!" he cried, looking about him. "And my men, mademoiselle?"

"I would put two at the door where you met us—out of sight—and leave two in the Rue St. Jacques where we shall enter,—until you see for yourself,—the coast is clear."

"Good!" said he, and he gave the necessary orders.

Inspector Loup issued from the Rue Soufflot entrance an hour later with a look of keen satisfaction.

Between the royalists on the one hand, and the republicans on the other, there were gigantic possibilities for an official of Inspector Loup's elasticity of conscience.

He had first of all enjoined strict silence on the part of Mlle. Fouchette and Jean Marot.

"For the public safety," he said.

During his inspection of the premises he had found opportunity to secretly transfer an envelope to the hand of Mlle. Fouchette. For the chief of the Secret System was too clever not to see the shoe that pinched Mlle. Fouchette's toes, and, while despising her weakness, was loyal to his obligation.

As soon as Mlle. Fouchette had bidden Jean good-night and found herself in her own room, she took this envelope from her pocket and drew near the lamp.

It was marked "To be opened to-morrow."

She felt it nervously. It crackled. She squeezed it between her thumb and forefinger. She held it between her eyes and the light. In vain the effort to pierce its secrets.

The old tower clock behind the Panthéon mumbled two.

"Dame!" she said, "it is to-morrow!"

And she hastily ripped the missive open.

Something bluish white fluttered to the floor. She picked it up.

It was a new, crisp note of five hundred francs!

She trembled so that she sank into the nearest chair, crushing the paper in her hand. Her little head was so dizzy—really—she could scarcely bring it to bear upon anything.

Except one thing,—that this unexpected wealth stood between her and what an honest young woman dreads most in this world!

The tears slowly trickled down the pale cheeks,—

tears for which it is to be feared only the angels in heaven gave Mlle. Fouchette due credit.

Suddenly she started up in alarm. But it was only some belated lodger, staggering on the stairs. She examined the lock on her door and resolved to get a new one. Then she looked behind the curtains of her bed.

The fear which accompanies possession was new to her.

Having satisfied herself of its safety, she cautiously spread out the bank-note on the table, smoothed out the wrinkles, read everything printed on it, and kissed it again and again.

One of the not least poignant regrets in her mind was that she could tell no one of her good fortune. Not that Mlle. Fouchette was bavarde, but happiness unshared is only half happiness.

She went to the thin place in the wall and listened. Jean was snoring.

She could look him in the face now.

It was a lot of money to have at one time,—with what she had already more than she had ever possessed at once in her life.

Freedom and fortune!

She picked up the envelope which had been hastily discarded for the fortune it had contained.

Hold! here was something more! She saw that it was her quittance,—her freedom! Her face, already happy and smiling, became joyous.

It was merely a lead-pencil scrawl on a leaf from Inspector Loup's note-book saying that——

As she read it her head swam.

"Oh! mon Dieu! It is impossible! Not Fouchette? I am not—and Mlle. Remy is my sister! Ah! Mère de Dieu! And Jean—oh! grand Dieu!"

She choked with her emotions.

"I shall die! What shall I do? What shall I do? And Lerouge, my half-brother! I shall surely die!"

With the paper crumpled in her folded hands she sank to her knees beside the big chair and bowed her head. Her heart was full to bursting, but in her deep perplexity she could only murmur, "What shall I do? what shall I do?"

* * * * * * * *

Jean Marot started from his heavy sleep much later than usual to hear the clatter of dishes in the next room. Going and coming rose a rather metallic voice humming an old-time chanson of the Quartier. He had never heard Mlle. Fouchette sing before; yet it was certainly Mlle. Fouchette:

> "Il est une rue à Paris,
> Où jamais ne passe personne,"—

and the rest came feebly and shrilly from the depths of his kitchen,—

> "La nuit tous les chats qui sont gris
> Y tiennent leur cour polissonne."

"Oh! oui da!" he cried from his bed. "Yes! and the cats sometimes get arrested, too, hein?"

The door leading to his salon was opened tentatively and a small blonde head and a laughing face appeared.

"Not up yet? For shame, monsieur!"

"What time is it?"

"Ten o'clock, lazybones."

"Ten——"

"Yes. Aren't you hungry?"

"Hungry as a wolf!" he cried, with a sweep of his curtains.

"Come, then!" And the blonde head disappeared.

"This is living," said the young man to himself as he was dressing,—he had never enjoyed such comfort away from home,—"the little one is a happy combination of housekeeper and cook as well as guide, philosopher, and friend. Seems to like it, too."

He noted that the little breakfast-table was arranged with neat coquetry and set off with a bunch of red roses that filled the air with their exquisite fragrance. Next he saw that Mlle. Fouchette herself seemed uncommonly charming. She not only had her hair done up, but her best dress on instead of the customary dilapidated morning wrapper.

His quick, artistic eye took in all of these details at a glance, falling finally upon the three marguerites at her throat.

"My faith! you are quite—but, say, little one, what's up?"

"I'm up," she laughingly answered, "and I've been up these two hours, Monsieur Lazybones."

"But——"

"Yes, and I've been down in Rue Royer-Collard and paid our milk bill,—deux francs cinquante, and gave that épicière a piece of my mind for giving me omelette eggs for eggs à la coque; for, while the eggs were not bad, one wants what one pays for, and I'm

going to have it, so she gave me an extra egg this time. How do you like these?"

Without waiting for him to answer she added, "They are vingt-cinq centimes for two, six at soixante-quinze centimes, and one extra, which is trois francs vingt-cinq; and I got another pound of that coffee in Boulevard St. Michel; but it is dreadful dear, mon ami,—only you will have good coffee, n'est-ce pas? But three-forty a pound! Which makes six francs soixante-cinq."

It was her way to thus account for all expenditures for their joint household. He paid about as much attention as usual,—which was none at all,—his mind still dwelling on the cheerfulness and genuine comfort of the place.

"And the flowers, petite——"

"Of course," she hastily interrupted, "I pay for the flowers."

"No! no!" he explained. "I don't mean that! Is it your birthday, or——"

"Yes," she said, thoughtfully, "that is it, Monsieur Jean. I was born this morning!"

He laughed, but saw from the sparkle of the blue eyes that he had not caught her real meaning.

"From the marguerites——"

"Ah, çà! I made the marchande des fleurs give me those. Aren't they sweet? How I love the flowers!"

"But I never saw such a remarkable effect, somehow. They are only flowers, and——"

"'Only flowers'! Say, now!"

"Still, it is curious," he added, resuming his coffee and rolls, as if the subject were not worth an argu-

ment or was too intangible to grasp. He could not account for the change in Mlle. Fouchette.

And if Jean Marot had been very much more of a philosopher than he was he would not have been able to understand the divine process by which human happiness softens and beautifies the human countenance.

"Mon ami," said the girl, seeking to hide the pleasure his admiration gave her, "do you, then, forget what we have to do to-day?"

"Lerouge? Yes,—that's so,—at once!"

Immediately after breakfast Jean sat down and wrote a friendly, frank letter, making a complete and manly apology for his anger and expressing the liveliest sympathy for his old-time friend.

"Tell him, Monsieur Jean, that you have changed your political opinions and——"

"Oh!"

"At least that you'll have nothing more to do with these conspirators."

"But, Fouchette——"

"Last night's discoveries ought to satisfy any reasonable being."

"True enough, petite."

"Then why not say so to——"

"Not yet,—I prefer acts rather than words,—but in good time——"

It is more difficult for a man to bring himself to the acknowledgment of political errors than to confess to infractions of the moral law.

In the mean time Mlle. Fouchette had cleared away and washed the breakfast things and stood ready to deliver the missive of peace.

"It is very singular," he repeated to himself after she had departed upon this errand, "very singular, indeed, that this girl—really, I don't know just what to think of her."

So he ceased to think of her at all, which was, perhaps, after all, the easiest way out of the mental dilemma.

The fact was that Mlle. Fouchette was fast becoming necessary to him.

With a light heart and eager step she tripped down the Boulevard St. Michel towards the ancient Isle de la Cité. On the bridge she saw the dark shadow of the Préfecture loom up ahead of her, and her face, already beaming with pleasure, lighted with a fresher glow as she thought of her moral freedom.

The bridge was crowded as usual with vehicles and foot-passers, but this did not prevent a woman on the opposite side from catching a recognizing glance of Mlle. Fouchette.

The sight of the latter seemed to thrill the looker like an electric shock. She stopped short,—so suddenly that those who immediately followed her had a narrow escape from collision. Her face was heavily veiled, and beneath that veil was but one eye, yet in the same swift glance with which she comprehended the figure she took in the elastic step and the happy face of Mlle. Fouchette.

"Mort au diable!" she muttered in her masculine voice,—a voice which startled those who dodged the physical shock,—and added to herself, "It must be love!" She saw the flowers at the girl's throat. "She loves!"

It was at the same instant Mlle Fouchette had raised her eyes to the Préfecture that stretched along the quai to the Parvis de la Notre Dame.

Ah, çà!

And after years of servitude,—from childhood,—some of it a servitude of the most despicable nature,—she had at last struck off the shackles!

No,—she had merely changed masters; she had exchanged a master whom she feared and hated for one she loved—adored!

Mlle. Fouchette, for the first time in her life, walked willingly and boldly past the very front door of the Préfecture,—"like any other lady," she would have said.

An agent of the Préfecture, who knew her from having worked with her, happened to see this from the court and hastily stepped out. He observed her walk, critically, and shook his head.

"Something is in the wind," said he.

But as the secret agents of the government are never allowed to enter the Préfecture, he watched for some sign to follow. She gave none.

Nevertheless, he slowly sauntered in the same direction, not daring to accost her and yet watchful of some recognition of his presence.

It was the same polite young man who had surrendered his place in the dance to Jean on the night of Mardi Gras. He had not gone twenty yards before a robust young woman heavily veiled brushed past him with an oath.

"Pardieu!" he said to himself, "but this seems to

be a feminine chase." And he quickened his steps as if to take part in the hunt.

Reaching the corner, Mlle. Fouchette doubled around the Préfecture and made straight for the Hôtel Dieu.

Rapidly gaining on her in the rear came the veiled woman, evidently growing more and more agitated.

And immediately behind and still more swiftly came the sleuth from the Préfecture. To be sure, there were always plenty of people crossing the broad plaza of Notre Dame from various directions and three going the same way would not have attracted attention.

Mlle. Fouchette drew near the steps of the big hospital, taking a letter from her bosom.

"That letter! Sacré! I must have that letter!" murmured the veiled woman, aloud.

"But you won't get it," thought the agent, gliding closer after her.

Mlle. Fouchette kissed the superscription as she ran up the steps.

"Death!" growled the veiled woman, half frantic at what she considered proof of the justice of her jealous suspicions as strong as holy writ.

The man behind her was puzzled; astonished most at Mlle. Fouchette's osculatory performance; but he promptly seized the pursuer by the arm.

"Not so fast, mademoiselle!"

"Go! I must have that letter!"

She turned upon the man like an enraged tigress, the one big black eye ablaze with wrath.

"Ah! It is you, eh? And right under the nose of the Préfecture!"

"Au diable!" she half screamed, half roared, strug-

gling to free herself from his iron grip. "It is none of your business."

"Your best friend, too!"

"Devil!" she shouted, striking at him furiously.

"Oh, no; not quite,—only an agent from the Préfecture, my bird."

"Oho! And she's a dirty spy like you! I know it! And I'll kill her! D'you hear that? À mort! The miserable moucharde!"

"Not to-day, my precious!" said the man, cleverly changing his grip for one of real steel. "Not to-day. Here is where you go with me, deary. Come!"

"I tell you I'll kill her!"

"We'll see about that later; in the mean time you can have a chance to sweat some of that absinthe out of you in St. Lazare. And look sharp, now! If you don't come along quietly I'll have you dragged through the streets! Understand?"

Mlle. Fouchette had, happily unconscious of this exciting scene, passed out of sight, inquired as to the condition of Lerouge, sent in the letter by a trusty nurse, and was returning across the Parvis de la Notre Dame at the same moment that Madeleine, alternately weeping and cursing, was thrown into her cell at the Préfecture.

CHAPTER XX

A FORTNIGHT had passed since the note to Lerouge, and to all appearances the latter had ignored it and its author.

Mlle. Fouchette was ordinarily an infallible remedy for blue-devils; but to Jean Marot Mlle. Fouchette was fast becoming a mere matter of course. A patient little beast of burden, she was none the less useful to a young man floundering around in the mire of politics, love, and other dire uncertainties.

As otherwise very good husbands are wont to unload their irritability on their wives, so Jean was inclined to favor Mlle. Fouchette. And as doting wives who voluntarily constitute themselves drudges soon become fixed in that lowly position, so Mlle. Fouchette naturally became the servant of the somewhat masterful Jean Marot.

She cheerfully accepted these exactions of his variable temper along with the responsibility for the economical administration of his domestic affairs.

But even the brightest and most willing of servants cannot always anticipate what is in the master's mind; so Jean had come to giving orders to Mlle. Fouchette. He had not yet beaten her, but the careless observer might have ventured the opinion that this would come in time.

It is the character of Frenchmen to beat women,—to stab them in the back one day when they are bored with them. The Paris press furnishes daily examples of this sort of chivalry. As a rule, the life of wife or mistress in France is a condition little short of slavery.

The mere arrangement of words is unimportant to the woman who anticipates blows, and who, doubtless, after the fierce fashion of the Latins, would love more intensely when these blows fell thickest and heaviest. As for being ordered about and scolded, it was a recognition of his dependence upon her.

Over and above all other considerations was Jean's future happiness. In this, at least, they were harmonious. For Jean himself was also looking solely to that end.

Since that memorable night when one brief pencilled sentence from Inspector Loup had bestowed upon her a new birth she found double reason for every sacrifice. She not only trampled her love underfoot with new courage, but bent all her energy and influence towards the reconciliation of Jean Marot and Henri Lerouge.

Mlle. Fouchette had gone to the hospital every day to ascertain the young man's condition. And when he had been pronounced convalescent she ascertained his new address. All of which was duly reported to Jean, who began to wonder at this sudden interest in one for whom she had formerly expressed only dislike.

Mlle. Fouchette offered no explanation of her conduct,—a woman is never bound to give a reason for her change of opinions. She never asked to see Lerouge,—never sent in her name to him,—but merely inquired, saying she was sent by one of his old friends. As she had intended, the name of this friend, Jean Marot, had been finally carried to Henri Lerouge.

One day she had seen Mlle. Remy, and had been so agitated and nervous that it was all she could do to sustain herself in the shadow of one of the great stone

columns. She had watched for this opportunity for days; yet when it suddenly presented itself she could only hide, trembling, and permit the girl to pass without a word.

"If I could only touch her!—feel her pretty fingers in my hand! Ah! but can I ever bring myself to that without betrayal? They would be so happy! and I,—why should I not be happy also? I love him,—I love her,—and if they love each other,—she can help it no more than he,—it would be impossible!"

Thus she reasoned with herself as the sunny head of Mlle. Remy disappeared in the gloomy corridor. Thus she reasoned with herself over and over again, as if the resolution she had taken required constant bracing and strengthening.

And it did require it.

For Mlle. Fouchette, humble child of the slums, had bravely cut out for herself a task that would have appalled the stoutest moralist.

Love had not only softened the nature of Mlle. Fouchette, as is seen,—it had revolutionized her. The fierce spirit to which she owed her reputation—of the feline claws and ready boot-heel—had vanished and left her weak and sensitive and meekly submissive. Personally she had not realized this change because she had not reasoned with herself on the subject. Not only her whole time but her entire mind and soul were absorbed in the service of Love. She gloried in her self-abasement.

Mlle. Fouchette would have gone farther,—would have deliberately and gladly sacrificed everything that a woman can lay upon the altar of her affections. She

had no moral scruples, being only a poor little heathen among the heathen.

Somewhat disappointed and not a little chagrined at first that Jean had not required, or even hinted at, this sacrifice, she had ended by secretly exulting in this nobility of character that made him superior to other young men, and distinctly approved of his fidelity to the image in his heart. Deprived of this means of proving her complete devotion to him, she elevated him upon a higher pedestal and prostrated herself more humbly.

Wherein she differed materially from the late Madame Potiphar.

As for Jean Marot, it is to be reluctantly admitted that he really deserved none of this moral exaltation, being merely human, and a common type of the people who had abolished God and kings in one fell swoop, constructed a calendar to suit themselves, and worshipped Reason in Notre Dame represented by a ballet dancer. In other words, he was an egoist of the egoists of earth.

He was, in fact, so unbearably a bear in his treatment of little Fouchette that only the most extraordinary circumstances would seem to excuse him.

And the circumstances were quite extraordinary. Jean was suffering from personal notoriety. Unseen hands were tossing him about and pulling him to pieces. Unknown purposes held him as in a vice.

Within the last two weeks his mail had grown from two to some twenty letters a day,—most of which letters were not only of a strongly incendiary nature, but expressed a wholly false conception of his political

position and desires. He was being inundated by indiscriminate praise and abuse. There were reams of well-meant advice and quires of threats of violence.

Among these letters had been some enclosing money and drafts to a considerable amount,—to be used in a way which was plainly apparent. From a distinguished royalist he had received in a single cover the sum of ten thousand francs "for the cause." From another had come five thousand francs for his "personal use." Various smaller sums aggregated not less than ten thousand francs more, most of which was to be expended at discretion in the restoration of a "good" and "stable" and "respectable" government to unhappy France. Besides cash were drafts and promises,—the latter reaching unmeasured sums. And interspersed with all these were strong hints of political preferment that would have turned almost any youthful head less obstinate than that which ornamented the broad shoulders of Jean Marot.

At first Jean was amused, then he was astonished. Finally he became indignant and angry to the bursting-point.

It was several days before he could adequately comprehend what had provoked this furious storm, with its shower of money and warning flashes of wrath and rumblings of violence. Then it became clear that he was being made the political tool of the reactionary combination then laying the axe at the root of the republican tree. The Orléanists, Bonapartists, Anti-Semites, and their allies were quick to see the value of a popular leader in the most turbulent and unmanageable quarter of Paris. The Quartier Latin was second

only to Montmartre as a propagating bed for revolution; the fiery youth of the great schools were quite as important as the butchers of La Villette.

The conclusions of the young leader were materially assisted and hastened by the flattering attention with which he was received by the young men wearing royalist badges, and by the black looks from the more timid republicans. He thereupon avoided the streets of the quarter, and devoted his time to answering such letters as bore signature and address. He sought to disabuse the public mind, so far as the writers were concerned, by declaring his adherence to the republic, and by returning the money so far as possible.

Jean Marot had now for the first time, with many others, turned his attention to the revelations in the Dreyfus case as appeared in the *Figaro,* and saw with amazement the use being made of a wholly fictitious crisis to destroy French liberty. He was appalled at these disclosures. Not that they demonstrated the innocence of a condemned man, but because they showed the utter absence of conscience on the part of his accusers and the criminal ignorance of the military leaders on whom France relied in the hour of public danger. For the first time he saw, what the whole civilized world outside of France had seen with surprise and indignation, that the conviction of Captain Dreyfus rested upon the testimony of a staff-officer of noble blood who lived openly and shamelessly on the immoral earnings of his mistress, and who was the self-acknowledged agent of a maison de toleration on commission. In the person of this distinguished member of the "condotteri" was centred the so-called

"honor of the army." As for the so-called "evidence," no police judge of England or America would have given a man five days on it.

Matters were at this stage when one morning about a fortnight since the day Mlle. Fouchette had changed masters they reached the bursting-point. Jean suddenly jumped from his seat where he had been looking over his mail and broke into a torrent of invective.

"Dame!" said Mlle. Fouchette, coming in from the kitchen in the act of manipulating a plate with a towel, —"surely, Monsieur Jean, it can't be as bad as that!"

"Mille tonnerres!" cried Jean, kicking the chair viciously,—"it's worse!"

"Worse?"

"Fouchette, you're a fool!"

Mlle. Fouchette kicked the door till it rattled. She also used oaths, rare for her.

"Stop!" he roared. "What in the devil's name are you doing that for? Stop!"

"Why not? I don't want to be a fool. I want to do just as you do, monsieur!"

"Oh, yes! it is funny; but suppose Inspector Loup wanted you for a spy——"

The plate slipped to the floor with a loud crash.

"There!" he exclaimed. And seeing how confused she got,—"Never mind, Fouchette. Come here! Look at that!"

Inspector Loup had politely requested Monsieur Marot to furnish privately any information in connection with the recent discoveries at his appartement which might be useful to the government,—especially in the nature of correspondence, etc.

As if Inspector Loup had no agents in the Postes et Télégraphes and had not already generously sampled the contents of Jean's mail, going and coming! But there are some cynical plotters in France who never use the public mails and, understanding the thoroughness of the Secret System, prefer direct communication.

"It is infamous!" said the girl, when she had calmly perused the letter.

"It is damnable!" said Jean.

"Still, it is his business to know."

"It is a miserable business,—a dishonorable business! And Monsieur l'Inspecteur will follow his dirty trade without any help from me!"

"Very surely!" said Mlle. Fouchette, emphatically.

"I've had enough of politics."

"Good!" cried she, gleefully.

"But, I'd like to punch the fellow who wrote this," he muttered, tearing an insulting letter into little bits and throwing them on the floor.

She laughed. "But that is politics," she remarked.

"True. We Frenchmen are worse than the Irish. I sometimes doubt if we are really fit for self-government; don't you know?"

"Mon ami, you are improving rapidly," she replied, with a meaning smile,—"why not others?"

"I—I—mille diables!"

"What! Another?"

"Worse!"

He slammed his fist upon the table in sudden passion.

"It is very provoking, but——"

"Read it!" he said, dejectedly.

She read beneath a Lyon date-line, in a small, crabbed, round hand,—

"You are not only a scoundrel, but a traitor, and you dishonor the mother who bore you as you betray the country which gives you shelter and protection."

"He's a liar!" cried the girl, with a flash of her former spirit.

"He is my father!" said Jean, scarcely able to repress his tears.

"Ah! mon Dieu!"

She slipped down at his knees and covered his hand with kisses.

"He cannot know!—he cannot know!" she said, consoling him. "He has only read the newspapers, like the rest. If he knew the truth, mon ami!"

"Well!" sighed the young man,—"let us see,—a telegram? I hadn't noticed that. There can be nothing worse than what one's father can write his son."

He read in silence, then passed it to her with a shrug of the shoulders.

"Monsieur de Beauchamp!" she exclaimed.

"Yes."

"'Come to Brussels at once.'"

"It is the Duc d'Orléans."

"Bah!"

"He knows, then, that I am in possession."

"Yes,—certainly."

"Probably wants me to take charge of his guns——"

"And dynamite bombs——"

"The wretches!"

"You can tell him you have turned them over to Inspector Loup."

"I will, pardieu!"

He was inspecting the superscription of the next envelope.

"Something familiar about that. Ah! its from Lerouge!"

"Lerouge!"

"Very good, very good! Look!"

Jean jumped up excitedly,—this time with evident pleasure.

"Coming here! and to-night! Good!"

"Oh! I'm so glad, mon ami!" exclaimed Mlle. Fouchette. "And, see! 'toi!'—he calls you 'thee;' he is not angry!"

The note from Lerouge was simply a line, as if in answer to something of the day.

"Merci,—je serai chez toi ce soir."

"'Toi,'—it is good!" said the girl.

"Yes, it looks fair. And Henri always had the way of getting a world of meaning in a few words."

"It is as if there had occurred nothing."

"Yes,—to-night,—and we must prepare him a welcome of some kind. I will write him as to the hour. Let us say a supper, eh, Fouchette?"

"A supper? and here? to-night?"

Mlle. Fouchette recoiled with dismay written in every line of her countenance.

"I don't see anything so strange or horrible about that," said Jean. "I did not propose to serve *you* for supper."

"N-no; only——"

"Well?"

Mlle. Fouchette was greatly agitated. He looked at her curiously. Monsieur Lerouge coming to see him and coming to supper—where she must be present—were widely different propositions according to Mlle. Fouchette; for she had hailed the first with delight and the second in utter confusion.

"Fouchette, why don't you say at once that you don't want to do it!" he brutally added.

"You do not understand. Would it be well for—for you, mon ami? It is not for myself. He probably does not know me."

"What if he does? It strikes me that you are growing mighty nice of late. I don't see what Lerouge has to do with you,—and you have pretended——"

"Pretended? Oh, monsieur! I beg——"

"Very well," he interrupted. "We can go out to a restaurant, I suppose, since you don't seem to want to take that trouble for me."

"Oh, monsieur!" she protested, earnestly, "it is not that; I would be glad, only—if it were not Lerouge."

"And why not Lerouge, pray?"

"But, mon ami, would he not tell his sister that——"

"Nonsense!"

"I know——" she hesitated.

"Pouf! Lerouge will not know you. And what if he did recognize the—the——"

"Savatière——"

"Yes; what, then? But, say! Fouchette, you shall wear that pretty bonne costume I got you. Hein?"

"But, mon ami,—mon cher ami! I'd rather not do

it," she faltered. "If Mademoiselle Remy should hear of it——"

"Bah! I know Lerouge. He'd think you my servant, my model. And have you not your own private establishment to retire to in case—really, you must!"

"W-well, be it so, Monsieur Jean; but if harm comes of it——"

"It will be my fault, not yours. It goes!"

Thus Jean, having reduced the "Savatière" to the condition of unsalaried servitude, now insisted upon her dressing the part.

He had paid her no empty compliment when he said that she looked her best as a maid. He had fitted her out for an evening at the Bullier for twenty-five francs. In the Quakerish garb of a French bonne she had never looked so demurely sweet in her life. The short skirt showed a pair of small feet and neat round ankles. Her spotless apron accentuated the delicacy of the slender waist. And with a cute white lace cap perched coquettishly over the drooping blonde hair—well, anybody could see that Mlle. Fouchette (become simply Fouchette by this metamorphosis) was really a pretty little woman.

And Jean kissed her on both cheeks and laughed at her because they reddened, and swore she was the sweetest little "bonne à toute faire" in all the world.

No doubt Marie Antoinette and her court ladies looked most charming when they played peasant at Petit Trianon; for it is a curious fact that many women show to better physical advantage in the simple costume of a neat servant than in the silks and diamonds of the mistress.

As for Fouchette, she was truly artistic, and she knew it. The knowledge that Jean comprehended this and admired her caused her eyes to shine and her blood to circulate more quickly. And a woman would be more than mortal who is not to be consoled by the consciousness of a successful toilet.

Yet she had dressed with many misgivings, between many sighs and broken exclamations. A little time ago she would have cared nothing whether it were Lerouge or anybody else; but now,—ah! it was a cruel test of her.

True, she must meet Lerouge some time. Oh! surely. She must see Mlle. Remy, too,—she must look into his sombre eyes,—feel the gentle touch of her hands! Often,—yes; often!

For if Jean married Mlle. Remy, perhaps she, Fouchette, might—why not? She would become their domestic, could she not?

Only, to meet Lerouge here,—in this way!

It was a bitter struggle, but love conquered.

Nevertheless, she felt that she required all of her natural courage, all the cleverness learned of rogues and the stoicism engrafted by suffering, to undergo the ordeal demanded of her and to follow the chosen path to the end.

"How charming you look, Fouchette!" he exclaimed, when she appeared in the evening.

"Thanks, monsieur."

She gave the short bob of the professional domestic. Her face was wreathed in smiles.

"But, I say, mon enfant, you are really pretty."

"Ah, çà!"

She was blushing,—painfully, because she knew that she was blushing. He put his arm about her waist and attempted to kiss her.

"No, no, no!" she cried, with an air of vexation,—"go away!"

"But you are really artistic, Fouchette. I must have a sitting of you in that costume."

He had made several sketches of her head, she serving as a model for Mlle. Remy. Only, he filled them out to suit his ideal. Mlle. Fouchette saw this; yet she was always pleased to pose for him.

"That is, if you are good," he added, in his condescending way.

"Have no fear,—I'll be good."

"Une bonne bonne, say."

"Bon-bon? Va!"

"And can sit still long enough."

"There! I can't sit still now, monsieur. The dinner,—it is nearly time."

She had set out the table with the best their mutual resources afforded. She had run up and down the street after whatever seemed necessary earlier in the day. Now that final arrangement had come, nothing seemed quite satisfactory. She changed this, replaced that with something else, ran backward a moment to take in the ensemble, then changed things back again. She had the exquisite French perception of the incongruous in form and color. Between times she was diving in and out of the little kitchen, where the soup was simmering and where a chicken from the nearest rôtisserie was being thoroughly warmed up. And in her lively comings and goings she wore a bright

smile and kept up the incessant purr, purr, purr of a vivacious tongue.

"And you must have champagne!" said she, reproachfully.

He had come in with the bottles under his arm. "You should have let me purchase it, at least. How much?"

"Ten francs."

"Ten francs! It is frightful! And two for this claret, I'll warrant!"

"More than that, innocent."

"What! more than——"

"Four francs."

She held up her little hands, speechless, being unable to do justice to his extravagance. He laughed.

"It is an important occasion," said he. "But, really, you are simply astonishing, little one."

"Là, là, là!"

Jean had an artistic sense, and Mlle. Fouchette now appealed to it. He watched her skipping about the place and tried to reconcile this sweet, bright-eyed, light-hearted creature with the woman he had known as "La Savatière."

"Que diable! but she is—well, what in the name of all the goddesses has come over the girl, anyhow? It can't be that Lerouge—yet she didn't want to have him see her here."

Conscious of this scrutiny, Fouchette would have been compelled to retreat to the kitchen on some pretext if she had not got this occasional shelter by necessity. She was so happy. Her heart was so light she could not be quite certain if she were really on the

earth or not. Never had Jean looked so handsome to her.

"Dame! It is nothing," she said and repeated over and over to herself,—"it is nothing; and yet I am surely the happiest girl in the world. Oh, when he looks at me with his beautiful eyes like that I feel as if I could fly! Mon Dieu! but if he touched me now I should faint! I should die!"

A vigorous ring at the door smote her ear. She trembled.

"Well, why don't you go, melon?" He spoke with a sharpness that fell on her like a blow.

She fumbled nervously at her apron-strings.

"Go as you are, stupid!"

"Yes, monsieur."

If her heart had not already fallen suddenly to zero, it would have dropped there when she opened the vestibule door.

The elderly image of Jean Marot stood before her. Somewhat stouter of figure and broader of feature, with full grayish beard and moustache that concealed the outlines of the lower face, but still such a striking likeness of father to son that even one less versed in the human physiognomy than Mlle. Fouchette must have at once recognized Marot père. The deeply recessed eyes looked darker and seemed to burn more fiercely than Jean's, and more accurately suggested Lerouge. Indeed, to the casual observer the man might have been the father of either of the two young men. In bearing and attire the figure was that of the prosperous French manufacturer. His voice was coldly harsh and imperious.

"So! mademoiselle!"

He paused in the vestibule and gazed searchingly at the trembling little woman with a fierce glare that made her feel as if she were being shrivelled up where she stood.

"So! May I inquire whether I am on the threshold of Monsieur Jean Marot's appartement or that of his —his——"

He was evidently making an effort to preserve his calmness, but the words seemed to choke him.

The implication, though not at once fully understood by Mlle. Fouchette, had the effect of rousing her powers of resistance.

"It is Monsieur Marot's, monsieur," she replied, with dignity.

"And you are——"

"His servant, monsieur."

"Oh! So!"

"And you, monsieur——"

"I am his father, mademoiselle."

"Ah!" He need not have told her that.

At this instant the inner door was thrown wide open, and Jean, who had recognized his father's voice with consternation, was in the opening.

Father and son stood thus confronting each other for some seconds, mute,—the father sternly and with unrelenting eye, the son with a pride sustained by obstinacy and bitterness. The sting of his father's letter was fresh, and he nerved himself for further insults. Nor had he to wait long, for his father advanced upon him as he retired into the room, with a growing menace in his tone at every successive step.

"So! Here you are, you—you——"

"Father!"

The old man had excitedly raised his hand as if to strike his son without further words, but he found Mlle. Fouchette between them.

"Monsieur! Monsieur! Hold, Jean! Do not answer him! Not now,—not now!"

The elder Marot glanced at her as if she were some sort of vermin. This at first, then he hesitated before kicking her out of the way.

"Ah, messieurs! is it the way to reconciliation and love to go at it in hot blood and hard words? Take a little time,—there is plenty and to spare. Anger never settles anything. Sit down, monsieur, will you not? Why, Monsieur Jean! Will you not offer your father a chair? And remember, he is your father, monsieur. Remember that before you speak. It is easy to say hard words, but the cure is slow and difficult, messieurs. Why not deliberate and reason without anger?"

As she talked she placed chairs, towards one of which she gently urged Marot senior. Then she insisted upon taking his hat. A man with his hat off is not so easily roused to anger as he is with it on, nor can one maintain his resentment at the highest pitch while sitting down. There was this much gained by Mlle. Fouchette's diplomacy.

But the first glance about the room restored the father's belligerency. He saw the elaborately laid table, the flowers, the wine——

"I am honored, monsieur," he said to his son, sarcastically, "though I had no idea that you expected me."

"It is—er—I had a friend——"

"Oh! I know quite well I have no reason to anticipate such a royal welcome. Yet there are three plates——"

"That was for Fouchette," said Jean, hastily and unthinkingly. "You will be welcome at my humble table, father."

"Fouchette,"—he had noticed the glance at the girl, now making a pretence of arranging the table,—"and so this is Fouchette, eh? And your humble table, eh?"

The irascible old gentleman regarded both of the adjuncts of life de garçon with a bitter smile. Still it was something like a smile, and the girl was quick to take advantage of it.

"Oh, this is a special occasion, monsieur,—a reconciliation dinner."

"A reconciliation dinner, eh?" growled the old man, suspicious of some sly allusion to himself and son. "And will you be good enough to speak for this dummy here and inform me who is to be reconciled and what the devil you've got to do with the operation?"

"To be sure!" cried Mlle. Fouchette, with affected gayety. "Only I must begin at the last first. I'm the next-door neighbor of Monsieur Jean, your son, and I take care of his rooms for him—for a consideration. My appartement is over there, monsieur, if you please. We are poor, but we must eat——"

"And drink champagne," put in the elder Marot, significantly.

"Is not champagne more fitting for the reconcilia-

tion of two men who were once friends than would be violent words?" she asked, with spirit.

"Who pays for it? It depends upon who pays for it!" He tried to ward off the conclusion by hurling this at both of them.

Jean reddened. He knew quite well the insinuation. It is not an unusual thing for Frenchmen to live on the product of a woman's shame.

"As if you should ask me if I were a thief, father!" protested the young man, now scarcely able to restrain his tears.

"And as if we had not pinched and saved and economized and all that! And can you look around you and not see that?" She had hard work to smother her indignation.

"Come to the point!" retorted the elder Marot, impatiently. "The woman! Where is the woman?"

Jean reddened more furiously and was more confused than before.

"It can't be this—this"—he regarded the slender, girlish figure contemptuously—"this grisette ménagère! You are not such a fool as to——"

"Oh! no, no, no, no!" hastily interrupted Mlle. Fouchette, with great agitation. "Oh, no, monsieur! Think not that! She is an angel! I am nothing to him,—nothing! Only a poor little friend,—a servant, monsieur,—one who wishes him well and would do and give anything to see him happy! Nothing more, monsieur, I assure you! I—mon Dieu! nothing more!"

There was almost a wail in her last note of too much protestation.

Both father and son scrutinized her attentively, while the color came and went in her now downcast face,—the one with a puzzled astonishment, the other with surprised alarm.

And both understood.

Not being himself a lover, the elder Marot divined at once what Jean, with all his opportunities, had till now failed to discover.

Another pull at the bell came like a gift from heaven to momentarily relieve poor little Fouchette of her embarrassment.

Jean started nervously to his feet, in sympathy with her intelligence, but by no means relieved in mind.

"It is Lerouge," he said, desperately. "Attend, Fouchette!"

The father glanced from one to the other quickly, inquiringly.

"Lerouge?"

"Yes, father,—it is he,—the friend—whom we—whom I expect—to whom I owe reparation——"

The two men studied each other in silence for the few seconds that followed, and Jean saw something like aroused curiosity and wonderment in his father's face,—something that had suddenly taken the place of anger.

Mlle. Fouchette had anticipated the coming of Lerouge with quite a different sentiment to that which overpowered Jean. The latter saw in it only the ruin of his most cherished hopes. Fouchette, on the other hand, with the quicker and surer intuition of the woman, believed the time now ripe for the reconciliation of not only Jean and Lerouge, but of father and

son. It would be impossible for Jean and his father to quarrel before this third party. Time would be gained. And then, were not the two affairs one? The straightening out of the tangle between the friends must carry with it the better understanding between Jean and his father.

As to herself, the girl had not one thought. She was completely lifted out of self,—carried away with the intentness of her solicitude for Jean's future.

The situation appealed to her sharpest instincts. Its possibilities passed through her alert mind before she had reached the door. Glorified in her purpose, she flung it wide open.

She was confronted by two persons,—the one bowing, hat in hand; the other smiling, radiantly beautiful.

Mlle. Fouchette stood for a moment like one suddenly turned to stone.

This was more than she had bargained for. She leaned against the wall instinctively, as if needing more substantial support than her limbs. Her throat seemed parched, so that when she would have spoken the result was merely a spasmodic gasp. Even the friendly semi-darkness of the little antechamber failed to hide her confusion from her visitors.

Then, recovering her self-possession by a violent effort, she reopened the inner door and announced, feebly,—

"Monsieur Lerouge,—Mademoiselle Remy!"

CHAPTER XXI

FORTUNATELY for Mlle. Fouchette, Jean's astonishment and temporary confusion at the unexpected apparition of the angel of his dreams extinguished every other consideration.

Mlle. Remy stood before him—in his appartement—smiling, gracious, a picture of feminine youth and loveliness,—her earnest blue eyes looking straight into his lustrous brown ones, searching, pénétrante!

He forgot Fouchette; he forgot his friend Henri; he forgot even the presence of an angry father.

"Hello, Jean!"

"Henri, mon ami!"

Recalled partially to his senses, Jean embraced his old friend after the effusive, dramatic French fashion. They kissed each other's cheeks, as if they were brothers who had been long parted.

"We will begin again, Henri," said Jean,—"from this moment we will begin again. Forgive me——"

"There!" cried Henri, "let us not go into that. We have both of us need of forgiveness,—I most of all. As you say, let us begin again. And in making a good start, permit me to present you to my sister Andrée, whom you have met before, and, I have reason to believe, wish to meet again. I have brought her along without consulting you, first because she insists on going where I go, next as an evidence of good faith and a pledge of our future good-will. Mademoiselle Remy, mon cher ami."

"No apology is necessary for bringing in the sun-

shine with you, mon ami," said Jean, bending over the small hand.

"Monsieur Marot is complimentary," said Mlle. Remy.

For a moment her eyes drooped beneath his ardent gaze.

"But, then, I know him so well," she quickly added, recovering her well-bred self-possession,—"yes, brother Henri has often talked about you, and I have seen you——"

There was a faint self-consciousness apparent here. And he knew that she was thinking of his lonely watches in front of her place of residence.

They rapidly exchanged the usual courtesies of the day, in the usual elaborate and ornate Parisian fashion.

Mlle. Fouchette saw every minute detail of this meeting with an expression of intense concern. She weighed every look and word and gesture in the delicate, tremulous balance of love's understanding. And she realized that Jean's way was clear at last, and at the same time saw the consequences to herself.

Well, was not this precisely what she had schemed and labored to bring about?

Yet she stole away unobserved to the little kitchen, and there turned her face to the wall and covered her ears with her hands, as if to shut it all out. Her eyes were dry, but her heart was drenched with tears.

Meanwhile, the elder Marot, who had risen politely upon the entrance of Lerouge and his sister, stood apparently transfixed by the scene. At the sight of Andrée his face assumed a curious mixture of eagerness and uncertainty. Upon the mention of her name the

uncertainty disappeared. A flood of light seemed to burst upon him with the encomiums showered upon his son.

When Jean turned towards his father—being reminded by a plucking of the sleeve—he was confounded to behold a face of smiles instead of the one recently clouded with parental wrath.

"This is m-my father, Monsieur Lerouge,—Mademoiselle——"

"What? Monsieur Marot? Why, this is a double pleasure!" exclaimed Lerouge, briskly seizing the outstretched hand. "The father of a noble son must perforce be a noble father. So Andrée says, and Andrée has good intuitions.—Here, Andrée; Jean's father! Just to think of meeting him on an occasion like this!"

Neither Lerouge nor his sister knew of the estrangement between Jean and his home. They had puzzled their heads in vain as to the reasons for Jean's retirement to the Rue St. Jacques, but were inclined to attribute it to politics or business reverses.

"Ah! so this is Monsieur Lerouge,—of Nantes," remarked the old gentleman when he got an opening.

"Of Nantes," repeated Lerouge.

"And this is Andrée,—bless your sweet face!—and —and,"—turning a quizzical look on the wondering Jean,—"and 'the woman'!"

It was now Lerouge's turn to be astonished. Jean and the girl attempted to conceal their rising color by casting their eyes upon the floor. Marot père was master of the situation.

"Your father was a noted surgeon," he continued, still holding the girl's hand.

"One of the best of his time," said Henri, proudly.

"And your mother——"

"Is dead, monsieur."

"Ah!"

The look of pain that passed swiftly over M. Marot's face was reflected in an audible sigh.

"One of the best of women," he went on, musingly, —"and you are the living image of your mother when I last saw her. Her name, too——"

"Oh, monsieur!" interrupted Andrée, excitedly, "you knew my mother, then?"

"So well, my dear girl, that I asked her to be my wife."

"Ah!"

"Oh, monsieur!"

"Father!"

"That is the truth. It is the additional truth that my cousin, the doctor, got her."

"My father was your cousin?" asked Lerouge. "Why, I come right by the family resemblance, Jean!"

"Yes," laughingly retorted the latter, "and the family temper."

"I was not aware that your mother again married," observed M. Marot.

"Yes,—Monsieur Frédéric Remy, the father of Andrée, here," said Henri. "Alas! neither he nor my mother long survived the loss of their younger daughter."

"Then there is yet another child?"

"Was," replied the young man, sadly. "For Louise, who was two years younger than Andrée, disappeared one day——"

"Disappeared!"

"Yes; and has never been heard of to this date. She was scarcely three years old. Whether she wandered away or was stolen, is dead or living, we do not know. She was never seen again."

"What a terrible blow! What a terrible blow!" murmured the elder Marot, thinking of the unhappy mother.

Mlle. Fouchette had reappeared a few moments before,—just in time to hear this family history. But she immediately returned to the kitchen, where she sank upon a low stool and bowed her face in her hands.

"Fouchette! Here, Fouchette!"

It was Jean's peremptory voice.

She hastily roused herself. She re-entered the little salon, and upon a sign from Jean conducted Henri Lerouge and his sister to Jean's bedroom, where she assisted Mlle. Remy to remove her hat. For up to this time the party had been grouped in running conversation without having settled down.

"How you tremble, child!" exclaimed Andrée,—"and you look so scared and pale. Is it, then, so bad as all that? What is the matter? Have they been quarrelling? I don't understand."

"Andrée!" whispered her brother, warningly. "Remember the salt woman!"

Mlle. Fouchette raised one little nervous finger to her lips and gently closed the door.

"Pray do not seem to notice," she whispered. "But you did not know, then, that Jean and his father have been estranged, oh! for months? That the poor young

man had been cast off,—forsaken by father and mother——"

"But why?" insisted Mlle. Remy. "It must have been something dreadful,—some horrible mistake, I mean. Why should——"

The confusion of Mlle. Fouchette was too evident to press this questioning. And it was increased by the curious manner in which the pair regarded her.

For a single instant she had wavered. She had secretly pressed her lips to her sister's dress, and she felt that she could give the whole world for one little loving minute in her sister's arms.

"Fouchette!"

At least one dilemma relieved her from another; so she flew to answer Jean's call, like the well-trained servant she was fast becoming.

"That's right, Fouchette. I'm glad to find you more attentive to our guests than I am. But I've been so confoundedly upset—and everlastingly happy. We shall want another plate. Yes, my father will honor us. I say, Fouchette, what a night! What a night!"

"I am so glad, Monsieur Jean! I am so glad!"

He considered her an instant and then hustled her into the kitchen and shut the door. "Let us consult a moment, my petite ménagère," were his last words to be overheard. In the kitchen he took her hands in his.

"Look here, Fouchette! I owe my happiness to you. Everything, mind you,—everything!"

"But have I not been happy, too?"

"There! For what you have done for me I could not repay you in a lifetime, little one."

"Then don't try, Monsieur Jean," she retorted, as if annoyed.

"And I'm going to ask you to increase the obligation. It is that you will continue to preserve the character you have assumed,—just for this occasion, you know. It will save me from——"

"Ah, çà! It is not much, Monsieur Jean," she interrupted, with a seraphic smile. "To be your servant, monsieur, is—— I mean, to do anything to please you is happiness."

"You are good, Fouchette,—so good! And when I think that I have no way to repay you——"

"Have I laid claim to reward?" she interposed, suddenly withdrawing her hands. "Have I asked for anything?"

"No, no! that is the worst of it!"

"Only your friendship,—your—your esteem, monsieur,—it is enough. Yet now that your affairs are all right and that you are happy, we must—must part,—it will be necessary,—and—and——" There was a pleading note in her low voice.

"Well?"

"You have been a brother,—a sort of a brother and protector to me, anyhow, you know, and it would wrong—nobody——"

The blood had slowly mounted to her neck as she spoke and the lips quivered a little as she offered them.

It was the last, and when he was gone she felt that it would strengthen her and enable her to bear up under the burden she had laid upon herself. She went about the additional preparations for the dinner mechanically.

There was not a happier quartette in all Paris on

this eventful evening than that which sat around the little table in Jean Marot's humble appartement in ancient Rue St. Jacques.

And poor little Mlle. Fouchette!

The very sharpness of the contrast made her patient, resolute abnegation more beautiful, her sacrifice more complete, her poignant suffering more divine. Unconsciously she rose towards the elevated plane of the Christ. She wore the crown of thorns in her heart; on her face shone the superhuman smile of sainthood.

If in his present sudden and overwhelming happiness Jean forgot Mlle. Fouchette except when she was actually before him he must be forgiven. But neither his father nor Henri Lerouge was so blind, though the latter evidently saw Mlle. Fouchette from a totally different point of view.

The gracious manner and encouraging smile of Mlle. Remy happily diverted Fouchette from the consideration of her critics. Every kind word and every smile went home to Mlle. Fouchette. And for the moment she gave way to the pleasure they created, as a stray kitten leans up against a warm brick. Sometimes it seemed as if she must break down and throw herself upon the breast of this lovely girl and claim her natural right to be kept there, forever next to her heart!

At these moments she had recourse to her kitchen, where she had time to recover her equilibrium. But Fouchette was a more than ordinarily self-possessed young woman. She had been educated in a severe school, though one in which the emotions were permitted free range. It was love now which required the curb.

She served the dinner mechanically, but she served it well. Amid the wit and badinage she preserved the shelter of her humble station.

Yet she knew that she was the frequent subject of their conversation. She saw that she was being covertly scrutinized by Lerouge. And, what was harder to bear, the elder Marot showed his sympathy by good-natured comments on her appearance and service. The cry of "Fouchette!" recalling her to all this from her refuge in the kitchen invariably sent a tremor through her slender frame.

"Henri said you were so practical!" laughingly remarked Mlle. Andrée.

"And am I not?" asked Jean, looking around the room.

"Not a bit! There is nothing practical here,—no,—and your Fouchette is the most impossible of all."

"Ah, Jean!" broke in Henri, "this Fouchette,—come now, tell us about her."

"With proper reservations," said M. Marot, seriously.

"No; everything!" cried Andrée.

She could see that it teased him, and persisted. "Anybody would know that she is not a common servant. Look at her hands!"

"I've seen your Fouchette somewhere under different circumstances," muttered Lerouge, "but I can't just place her."

"Well," said Jean, after a moment's reflection, "she is an uncommon servant."

He began to see that some frankness was the quickest way out of an unpleasant subject. "The fact is, as she

has already told my father, Fouchette is an artist's model and lives next door to me. She takes care of my rooms for a consideration. But all the money in the world would not repay what I owe her,—quite all of my present happiness! Let me add, my dear mademoiselle, that the less attention you show her, the less you seem to notice her, the better she will like it."

"How interesting!" cried Andrée; "and how unsatisfactory!"

"Very," said her brother, with a meaning smile.

"Some day, mademoiselle, I will tell you,—not now. I beg you to excuse me just now."

"Certainly, monsieur; but, pardon me, she must be ill,—and her face is heavenly!"

"Is it?" asked Jean. "I had not noticed. Perhaps because one heavenly face is all I can see at the same time."

"Ah, monsieur!"

She tried to hide her confusion in a sip of champagne.

M. Marot and Lerouge became suddenly interested in a sketch upon the wall and rose, puffing their cigars, to make a closer and more leisurely examination.

Jean's hand somehow came in contact with Andrée's,—does any one know how these things come about?—and the girl's cheeks grew more rosy than usual. She straightway forgot Mlle. Fouchette. Her eyes were lowered and she gently removed her hand from the table.

"Here is the true model for an artist," said he.

"But I never sat," she declared.

"Oh, don't be too sure."

"Never; wouldn't I remember it?"

"Perhaps not. One doesn't always remember everything."

She blushed through her smile. She had unconsciously yielded her hand again.

They talked airy nothings that conceal the thoughts. Then, in a few minutes, she discovered that his hand again covered hers and was innocently caressing it. She drew it away in alarm.

"Do not take it away! Are we not cousins, mademoiselle?"

"Oh, yes; funny, isn't it? Long-lost cousins!" She laughed merrily.

"And now that we are found——"

"It seems to me as if I had known you a long time," she continued,—"for years and years! Or, perhaps it is because—because——"

"Come! let me show you something," he interrupted, still retaining the hand, "some poor sketches of mine."

He led her to the portfolio-stand in the corner and seated himself at her feet.

The elder connoisseurs, meanwhile, had taken the sketch in which they were interested from its place on the wall to the better light at the table.

"'La Petite Chatte.'"

"An expressive title, truly."

"Why, its Mademoiselle Fouchette!" exclaimed M. Marot, holding the picture off at arm's length.

"It is, indeed! And the real Fouchette as I last beheld her at the notorious Café Barrate. It's the 'Savatière'! That solves a mystery."

Lerouge thereupon took M. Marot by the arm, replaced the picture on the wall, and led the old gentleman to the corner farthest from that occupied by the younger couple, and there the two conversed over their cigars in a low tone for a long time.

In that time they had mutually disposed of the other couple,—Henri Lerouge, as brother and legal custodian of Mlle. Andrée Remy; M. Marot, as father of Jean Marot. They had not only agreed that these two should marry, but had arranged as to the amount of the "dot" of the girl and the settlement upon the young man. Mlle. Andrée had two hundred and fifty thousand francs in her own right, but the chief consideration in the case was, to M. Marot, the fact that she was the daughter of the beautiful woman whom he had once loved. For this consideration he agreed to double the amount of her dot and give his son a junior partnership in the silk manufactory at Lyons.

This arrangement had no relation whatever to the sentiment existing between the young couple. It would have been concluded, just the same, if they had not loved.

In French matrimonial matters love is a mere detail. The parents, or those who stand in the place of parents, are the absolute masters, and therefore the high contracting powers. Sons as well as daughters are subject to this will until after marriage. It is a custom strong as statute law. If inclination coincide with parental desire, well and good; if not, a social system which rears young orphan girls to feed the insatiate lust of Paris winks at the secret lover and the mistress.

With the reasonable certainty of the approval of both father and brother and with a heart surcharged with love for the sweet girl whom he felt was not indifferent to him, Jean had reason to feel happy and confident. As they bent over the pictures they formed a charming picture themselves.

"Really, monsieur!"

Mlle. Remy saw herself reproduced with such faithfulness that she started.

"Well?"

Jean looked up in her face with all his passion concentrated in his eyes.

She was bending over the head of a young girl with a profusion of fair hair down upon her shoulders, and she forgot. Another showed the same face in a pen-and-ink profile, with the same glorious hair.

"They are amateurish——"

"Au contraire," she interrupted, "they are quite—but Henri did not tell me, monsieur, that you were an artist."

"And he was right, cousin."

She had turned her face away from the light, so he could not see her blushes. For these pictures told a story of love more vividly and more eloquently than words. She was trying to piece out that which remained untold.

"The pictures are well done, Cousin Jean,—and your model——"

"Fouchette."

"Oh, yes; I see now! She *is* a model, truly!"

Mlle. Remy seemed to derive a good deal of satisfaction from this conclusion.

IT WAS A CRITICAL MOMENT

"But," she added, quickly, "do you think she looks so much like me?"

"A mere suggestion," he said.

"It is curious,—very curious, mon—Cousin Jean; but do you know——"

Their heads were very close together. Unconsciously their lips met.

Mlle. Fouchette had been engaged in the work of washing dishes. It was an excuse to kill time and something to occupy her attention. As she carefully arranged everything in its place she realized that it was for the last occasion. She knew her work was done. So she made everything particularly bright and clean. The dessert dishes and glasses were still on the table, and she had stepped out cautiously and timidly to fetch them. It was a critical moment.

With the noiseless tread of a scared animal she turned back again into the kitchen, and, closing the door softly, leaned against it with ghostly face. She quickly stuffed the corner of her apron into her mouth to keep back the scream of agony that involuntarily rose to her lips. Her thin hands were tightly clinched and her body half drawn into a knot.

"Ah! mon Dieu! mon Dieu!"

Even the Saviour stumbled and fell beneath the heavy cross He had assumed to insure the happiness of others.

And Mlle. Fouchette was only a poor little, weak, nervous, ignorant woman, groping blindly along the same rugged route of her Calvary.

Unconsciously the same despairing cry had broken from her lips.

" Fouchette!"

It was Jean's voice.

Half fainting, half terror-stricken at her unfortunate position, she drew a needle from the bosom of her dress and thrust it into her thigh—twice..

" Fouchette!"

" Yes, monsieur!"

" That poor girl is certainly ill, Je—Cousin Jean," said Mlle. Remy, sympathetically.

" Nonsense!" he lightly replied.

He wished to spare the unhappy Fouchette this attention. " She has worked too hard. Drop it till to-morrow, little one," he said, gently. " You must let things alone for to-night."

" Indeed, it is nothing, monsieur. I must clear away these dessert dishes——"

" Have a glass of wine," insisted Andrée, putting her arm affectionately about the slender waist and pouring out a glass of champagne.

Lerouge regarded them with a frown of disapproval. Turning to M. Marot, he said,—

" You were congratulating France just now upon a new ministry, monsieur. At least the new ministry ought to give us a new set of spies. Don't you think——"

But the wine-glass broke the last sentence, as it fell to the floor with a crash.

Only the protecting arm of Mlle. Remy sustained the drooping figure for a moment, then Jean and his affianced bride bore it gently to the model's home.

CHAPTER XXII

"C'EST fini!"

The girl raised herself wearily from her knees by the side of her bed, where she had fallen when she had bravely gotten rid of Jean and Andrée.

"C'est fini!"

She repeated the words as she looked around the room, the poor, cheap little chamber where she had been so happy. Just so has many a bereaved returned from the freshly made grave of some beloved to see the terrible emptiness of life in every corner of the silent home.

Mlle. Fouchette had grievously overrated her capacity to bear—to suffer. Instead of lightening the load she had assumed, the discovery of her sister in the beloved had doubled it.

She had schooled herself to believe that to be near the object of her love would be enough. She had thought that all else, being impossible, might be subordinated to the great pleasure of presence. That to serve him daily, to share after a fashion his smiles and sorrows, to be at his elbow with her sympathy and counsel, would be her happiness,—all that she could ask for in this world. It would be almost as good as marriage, n'est-ce pas?

Fouchette was in error. Not wholly as to the last assumption; it was a false theory, marriage or no marriage. Countless thousands of better and more intellectual people have in other ways found, are finding, will continue to find, it to be so.

Mlle. Fouchette's tactical training in the great nor-

mal school of life had not embraced Love. Therefore no line of retreat had been considered. She was not only defeated, she was overwhelmed.

All of her theories had vanished in a breath.

Instead of finding happiness in the happiness of those whom she loved, it was torture,—the thumbscrew and the rack. It was terrible!

How could she have imagined that she might live contentedly under this day after day?

The malice of Lerouge had been but the knock-out blow. It seemed to her now that his part was not half so cruel as that one kiss,—the kiss of Andrée's, that had stolen hers, Fouchette's, from his warm lips!

Yes, it was finished.

There was nothing to live for now. Her sun had set. The light had gone out, leaving her alone, friendless, without a future.

The fact that she had herself willed it, brought it about, and that she earnestly desired their happiness, made her despair none the less dark and profound.

She felt that she must get away,—must escape in some way from the consequences of her own folly.

She precipitated herself down the narrow stairs at the risk of her neck and darted down the Rue St. Jacques half crazed with grief. She had made no change in her attire, had not even paused to restrain the blonde hair that fell over her face.

Rue St. Jacques is in high feather at this hour in the evening. It is the hour of the jolly roysterer, male and female. Students, soldiers, bohemians, and bums jostle each other on the corners, while the dame de trottoir stealthily lurks in the shadows with one eye out for

possible victims and the other for the agents de police. The cafés and wine-shops are aglare and the terrasse chairs are crowded to their fullest of the day.

The spectacle, therefore, of a pretty bonne racing along the middle of the street very naturally attracted considerable attention.

This attention became excitement when another woman, who seemed to spring from the same source, broke away in hot pursuit of the servant.

Nothing so generously appealed to the sensitiveness of Rue St. Jacques as a case of jealousy, and women-baiting was a favorite amusement of the quarter.

There was now a universal howl of delight and approbation. When the pursuing woman tripped and fell into the gutter the crowd greeted the unfortunate with a shower of unprintable pleasantries.

"Ma foi! but she is outclassed!"

"Oh, she's only stopped to rest."

"Too much absinthe!"

"The cow can never catch the calf!"

"The fat salope! To think she could have any show in a race or in love with the pretty bonne!"

"Yes; but where's the man?"

"Dame! It is one-eyed Mad!"

"Let her alone,—she's drunk!"

The fallen woman had laboriously regained her feet and turned a torrent of vulgar maledictions upon the jeering crowd.

Then, having regained her equilibrium, she staggered forward in renewed pursuit. The broad-bladed, double-edged knife of the Paris assassin gleamed in her right hand.

"Bah! she will never catch her," said a man whose attention had been called to this.

"Let them fight it out," assented his companion.

"Hold! She is down again."

Madeleine had reached the Rue Soufflot, and, in turning the corner sharply, had fallen against the irregular curb.

The stragglers from the wine-shops hooted. The drunken women fairly screamed with delight. It was so amusing.

But Madeleine did not get up this time.

This was more amusing still; for the crowd, now considerably augmented by the refuse from the neighboring tenements, launched all sorts of humorous suggestions at the prostrate figure, laughing uproariously at individual wit.

A few ran to where the dark figure lay, and a merry ruffian playfully kicked the prostrate woman.

Still the woman stirred not.

The ruffian who had just administered the kick slipped and fell upon her, whereat the crowd fairly split with laughter. It was so droll!

But the man did not join in this, for he saw that he had slipped in a thin red stream that flowed sluggishly towards the gutter, and that his hands were covered with warm blood.

"Pardieu! she's dead," he whispered.

And they gently turned her over, and found that it was so.

Madeleine had fallen upon her arm, and the terrible knife was yet embedded in her heart.

* * * * * * * *

Meanwhile, unconscious of this pursuit and its fatal consequences, Mlle. Fouchette had swiftly passed from the narrow Rue St. Jacques into Rue Soufflot, and was flying across the broad Place du Panthéon. Blind to the glare of the wine-shops, deaf to the gay chanson of a group of students and grisettes swinging by from the Café du Henri Murger,—indeed, dead to all the world,—the grief-stricken girl still ran at the top of her speed—towards——

The river?

Her poor little overtaxed brain was in a whirl. She had no definite idea of anything beyond getting away. As a patient domestic beast of burden suddenly resumes his savage state and rushes blindly, pell-mell, he knows not where, so Mlle. Fouchette now plunged into the oblivion of the night.

Unconsciously, too, she had taken the road to the river,—the broad and well-travelled route of the Parisian unfortunate.

Ah! the river!

For the first time it occurred to her now,—how many unbearable griefs the river had swallowed up.

There were so many things worse than death. One of these was to live as Madeleine had lived. Never that! Never! Not now,—once, perhaps; but not now. Oh, no; not now!

The river seemed to beckon to her,—to call upon her, reproachfully, to come back to it,—to open its slimy arms and invite her to the palpitating bosom that had soothed the sorrows of so many thousands of the children of civilization.

And Fouchette was the offspring of the river. Why

had she been spared, then? Had it proved worth while?

She recalled every incident of that eventful period. She remembered the precise spot where she had been pulled out that gray morning, years before.

This idea had flitted through her mind, at first vaguely, then, still unsought, began to assume definite shape.

Eh, bien,—soit! From the river to the river!

Mlle. Fouchette, as we have seen, had all the spontaneity of her race, accentuated by a life of caprice and reckless abandon. To conceive was to execute. Consequences were an after-consideration, if at all worthy of such a thing as consideration.

She stopped. But this hesitation was not in the execution of her suddenly formed purpose. It was necessary to recover breath, and to decide whether to go by the way of the Rue Clovis, or to turn down by the steep of Rue de la Mont Ste. Geneviève to the Boulevard St. Germain.

It was but for a few panting moments.

The clock of the ancient campanile of the Lycée Henri IV. struck the hour of eleven. The hoarse, low, booming sound went sullenly rumbling and roaring up and down the stone-ribbed plaza of the Panthéon, and rolled and reverberated from the great dome that sheltered the illustrious dead of France.

The curious old church of St. Étienne du Mont rose immediately in front of the girl, and the sound of the bells startled her,—shook her ideas together,—and, with the sight of the church, restored, in a measure, her presence of mind.

Her thoughts flew instantly back to the happy scene she had recently left behind. The bells of the old tower,—ah! how often she and Jean had regulated their ménage by their music!

And she looked up at the grimly mixed pile of four centuries, with its absurd little round tower, its grotesque gargouilles, and grass-grown walls,—St. Étienne du Mont.

Doubtless they would be married here.

To be married where reposed the blessed bones of Ste. Geneviève, or at St. Denis amid the relics of royalty, was the dream of every youthful Parisienne. And Ste. Geneviève was the patronne of the virgins as well as of the city of Paris.

Mlle. Fouchette had witnessed a wedding at good old St. Étienne du Mont,—indeed, any one might see a wedding here upon any day of the week, and at almost any hour of the day, in season,—and she now recalled the pretty scene. Yes, of course Jean and Andrée would be married here.

Obeying a curious impulse, the girl, still breathing heavily, ascended the broad stone steps and peeped into the little vestibule. The dark baize door within stood ajar, and she could see the faint twinkle of distant lights and smell the escaping odors from the last mass.

She would go in—just for a moment—to see again where they would stand before the altar. It would do no harm. Her last thoughts should be of those she loved,—loved dearer—yes, a great deal more dearly than life.

Entering, she mechanically followed her training at Le Bon Pasteur, and, bending a knee, dipped the tips

of her fingers in the font and crossed her heaving breast.

The great wax tapers were still burning about the ancient altar, and here and there pairs and bunches of expiatory candles flickered in the little chapels.

As no other light relieved the sombre blackness of the vaulted edifice, an indefinite ghostliness prevailed, from out of which the numerous gilded forms of the Virgin and the saints appeared half intangible, as if hovering about with no fixed support or substance.

The church might have been deserted, so far as any living indications were visible, though two or three darker splotches on the darkness could have been taken for as many penitents seeking the peace which passeth understanding.

Gliding softly down the right, outside of the pews and row of stately columns, Mlle. Fouchette stopped only at the last pillar, from which she had a near view of the pretty white altar. She remained there, leaning against the pillar, her eyes bent upon the altar, motionless, for a long time.

During that period she had pictured just how the young couple would look,—how beautiful the bride would appear,—how noble and handsome Jean Marot would shine at her side.

She supplied all of the details as she had seen them once before, correcting and rearranging them in her mind with scrupulous care.

All of this dreamily and without emotion, as one lies in the summer shade idly tracing the fleeting clouds across a summer's sky.

She had grown wonderfully calm, and when she

turned away she gently put the picture behind her as an accomplished material thing.

On her way she paused before the little chapel of Ste. Geneviève. There were candles burning before the altar, and a delicious, holy incense filled the air.

Mlle. Fouchette recalled the stories of the intercession of Ste. Geneviève in behalf of virgin suppliants, and impetuously fell upon her knees outside the railing and bowed her face in her hands.

She knew absolutely nothing of theological truth and error; religion was to her only a vague scheme devised for other people—not for her. She had never in all her life uttered a prayer save on compulsion. Now, impulsively and without forethought, she was kneeling before the altar and acknowledging God and the intercession of the Christ.

It was the instinct of poor insignificant humanity—the weakest and the strongest, the worst and the best—to seek in the hour of suffering and despair some higher power upon which to unburden the load of life.

To say now that Mlle. Fouchette prayed would be too much. She did not know how,—and the few sentences she recalled from Le Bon Pasteur seemed the mere empty rattle of beads.

She simply wished. And as Mlle. Fouchette never did anything by halves, she wished devoutly, earnestly, passionately, and with the hot tears streaming from her eyes, without uttering a single word.

It would have been, from her point of view, quite impertinent for her to thrust her little affairs directly before the Throne. She was too timid even to appeal to the Holy Virgin, as she had often heard others do,

with the familiarity of personal acquaintance; but she felt that she might approach Ste. Geneviève, patronne des vierges, with some confidence, if not a sense of right.

She silently and tearfully laid her heart bare to Ste. Geneviève, and with her whole passionate soul called upon her for support and assistance. If ever a young virgin needed help it was she, Fouchette, and if Ste. Geneviève had any influence at the higher court, now was the time to use it. First it was that Jean and Andrée might be happy and think of her kindly now and then; next, that she might be forgiven for everything up to date and be permitted to be good,—that some way might be opened to her, and that she might be kept in that way.

Otherwise she must surely die.

If Sister Agnes might only be restored to her, it would be enough. It was all she would ask,—the rest would follow. She must have Sister Agnes,—good Sister Agnes, who loved her and would protect her and lead her safely to the better life. Oh! only send her Sister Agnes——

"My child, you are in trouble?"

That gentle voice! The soft, caressing touch!

Ah! le bon Dieu!

It was Sister Agnes, truly!

The religieuse, ever struggling against the desires of the flesh, had unconsciously kneeled side by side with the youthful suppliant. Disturbed by the sobs of the latter, she had addressed her sympathetically.

To poor little ignorant and believing Fouchette it was as if one of the beautiful painted angels had sud-

denly assumed life and, leaving the vaulted ceiling, had come floating down to softly brush her with her protecting wings. Awe-stricken at what seemed a direct manifestation of God, she found no words to express either surprise or joy. She simply toppled over into the arms of the astonished religieuse and lost consciousness. The reaction was too great.

Sister Agnes, who had not recognized in the girl dressed as a bonne-à-toute-faire her protégée of Le Bon Pasteur, was naturally somewhat startled at this unexpected demonstration, and called aloud for the sacristan.

"Blessed be God!" she exclaimed, when they had carried the girl into the light of the vestry,—"it is Mademoiselle Fouchette!"

"What's she doing here?" demanded the man, with a mixture of suspicion and indignation.

"Certainly nothing bad, monsieur. No, it can be nothing bad which leads a young girl to prostrate herself at this hour before the altar of the blessed Ste. Geneviève!"

"Ste. Geneviève! That girl? That—— Mère de Dieu! what next?"

"Chut!"

"But it's a sacrilege, my sister. It's a profanation of God's holy temple!"

"S-sh! monsieur——"

"It's a wonder she was not stricken dead! Before Ste. Geneviève!"

"S-sh! monsieur," protested the religieuse, gently, "ne jugez pas!"

"But——"

"Ne jugez pas!"

They had, in the mean time, applied simple restoratives with such effect that Mlle. Fouchette soon began to exhibit signs of reanimation.

"Will you kindly leave me alone with her here for a few minutes?" whispered Sister Agnes.

"Willingly," replied the ruffled attendant. "And mighty glad to——"

"S-sh!"

When Mlle. Fouchette's eyes were finally opened they first fell upon the motherly face of Sister Agnes, then wandered rapidly about the room, as if to fix her situation definitely, to again rest upon the religieuse. And this look was one of inexpressible content,—of boundless love and confidence.

Sister Agnes, who was seated on the edge of the sofa on which the girl lay extended, leaned over and affectionately kissed her lips.

"You are much better now, my child?"

"Oh, yes, indeed! I was afraid it might be only—only a dream,—one dreams such things, n'est-ce pas? But it is true! There is really a God, and prayers are answered—when one believes,—yes; when one believes very hard! Even the prayers of a poor little, miserable, wicked, motherless girl like me. Ah!——"

"Cer—certainly, chérie; but don't try to talk just yet. Wait a bit. You will feel stronger."

The religieuse thought the girl's mind was wandering.

"And good Ste. Geneviève heard me and had you sent to me. It was all I asked. For I knew that if I only had you, I could be good, and I would know what

to do. It was all I asked—for myself. And you were sent at once. Dear, good, sweet Sister Agnes!—the only one who ever loved me!—except Tartar,—and love is necessary, n'est-ce pas?"

"You asked for me?"

Sister Agnes listened now with intense interest. Mlle. Fouchette was a revelation.

"Oh! yes,—and they sent you—almost at once! Blessed Ste. Geneviève!"

"Why, what was the matter, Fouchette?" inquired Sister Agnes, wiping her eyes, after gently disengaging the young arms from her neck. She tried to speak cheerily.

"Take me as you did when I first saw you,—when I was in the cell,"—and the voice now was that of a pleading child,—"that way; yes,—kiss me once more."

On the matronly bosom of Sister Agnes the girl told her story,—the story of her love, of her suffering, of her hopes, of her final failure, of her despair.

"You see, my more than mother, it was too much——"

"Too much! I should think so!" interrupted the good sister, brusquely, to prevent a total breakdown. "Sainte Mère de Dieu! such is for the angels in heaven, mon enfant,—for mortals, never!"

"When I found she was my sister,—that her brother was my brother,—and that even Jean Marot—I could not be one to spoil this happiness by making myself known. No, I would rather die. I should hate myself even if they did not hate me. No, no, no! I could never do that!"

"Fouchette, you are an angel!"

The religieuse slipped to the floor at the girl's side, and covered the small hands with kisses. She felt the insignificance of her own worldly trials.

"I am not worthy to sit in your presence, Fouchette," she faltered.

* * * * * * * *

As they slowly passed out of the church the younger seemed to support the elder woman. Both bowed for a few moments in silence before the altar of Ste. Geneviève.

And when they arose, Mlle. Fouchette took from the bosom of her dress a bit of folded paper and put it in the box of offerings inside the rail.

It was the bank-note for five hundred francs.

At the door the grim sacristan, long impatient for this departure, growled his final disapproval of Mlle. Fouchette.

"She's a terror," he said.

"She's a saint, monsieur," was the quiet reply of Sister Agnes.

A few minutes later the great door of the Dames de St. Michel closed upon the two women. Mlle. Fouchette had ceased to exist, and Mlle. Louise Remy had entered upon the coveted life of peace and love.

THE END

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